■ WORLD /A7

Elton John to wed longtime partner

■ SPORTS / A20

Kobe fires 62 points in 33 minutes, leads Lakers past Mavericks

■ NEWS / A2

Lingayen-Dagupan bishop confirms jueteng's back

■ ENTERTAINMENT /A2-1

Woody Allen: 'Mediocre' maker of 'miserable' films

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Palace confirms energy super body now in place

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG HAS APPOINTED ENERGY Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya head of a newly formed oil and energy super body amid protests from businessmen that the superfluous agency would turn off investor interest in the privatization of the power generation sector.

PALACE CONFIRMS/ A6

Santa Clauses: Who's naughty, who's nice

By Jocelyn Uy
Metro

HO-HO-HO!
HULI KA!

HE IS DEFINITELY ON Santa's naughty list.

Policemen, dubbed "Santa cops," yesterday arrested Robert Francis

SANTA/ A4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

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Palace: GMA is not afraid of Lopezes

Ermita: Gov't bent on collecting P42B from Meralco

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG YESterday confirmed that it was considering a government takeover of Manila Electric Co. by converting into equity the P42 billion that Meralco allegedly owes state-owned National Power Corp.

Even so, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said President Macapagal-Arroyo was unfazed by retribution from the Lopez family which controls not only Meralco but also the influential ABS-CBN media empire.

In another interview, Napocor president Cyril del Callar also confirmed that Meralco owed the state-owned power generation firm P42 billion from their 10-year power supply agreement signed in 1994 based on Napocor's filings with the Commission on Audit.

Until a final settlement of the dispute has been approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission, Del Callar said the government could still press its collection of the P42 billion owed by Meralco.

Another option being considered by the government is the liq-

PALACE/ A6

TIMELINE

How Meralco incurred huge debt to gov't

Nov. 21, 1994— Meralco and Napocor sign a contract for the sale of electricity (CSE) which obligates Meralco to buy at least 3,600 megawatts of electricity every month for 10 years, or from Jan. 1, 1995 to Dec. 31, 2004. It also obligates Meralco to buy 60,092 gigawatt-hours (GWh) from 2002-2004.

June 8, 2001—Republic Act No. 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira), is en-

HOW MERALCO/ A6

SUCCESSION LINE. Retired Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. and his wife Virginia heartily congratulate newly appointed Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban after the oath-taking ceremony in Malacañang. Looking on is Panganiban's wife Elenita. LYN RILLON

Appointment of Panganiban draws praise

By Norman Bordadora and Philip C. Tubeza

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo's appointment of Associate Justice Artemio Panganiban as Supreme Court chief drew praise yesterday but the introduction of the so-called "revolving door" policy to the high tribunal came under criticism in Congress.

Speaker Jose de Venecia yesterday said several senior magistrates of the high bench were now being lined up to assume the highest post in the judiciary once Panganiban reached the mandatory retirement age of 70 on Dec. 7, 2006.

Senior Associate Justice Reynato Puno is the "logical successor" to Panganiban, said De Venecia.

The revolving door policy referred to the much-criticized succession system, likened to a game of musical chairs, in the Armed Forces. There, generals about to retire serve brief terms.

However, De Venecia said the new Chief Justice was "one of the respected and brilliant jurists in the country and also a prolific writer. I believe he will make an excellent [chief] justice."

APPOINTMENT/ A4

Palace set to pay Piatco ₱3B soonest

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Armand N. Nocum

MALACANANG IS INCLINED TO pay Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) the minimum P3 billion ordered by the Supreme Court just to expedite the opening of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 by the first quarter next year.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government had the option to file a motion for reconsideration with the high court but that doing so did not appear to be worth the effort. He pointed out that the resolution of a motion for reconsideration could "take several months and further delay" the opening of the controversial terminal.

"Our policy group might opt to pay [the amount] immediately, since the money is already there, and go on with the completion of the terminal," Ermita said.

But Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo warned that the government could lose heavily if it paid up before taking over Naia 3.

The tribunal upheld a decision by Judge Henrick Gingoyon of the Pasay Regional Trial Court Branch 117 for the government to pay Piatco the P3 billion held in escrow as part of the latter's compensation for building Naia 3.

Piatco's build-operate-transfer contract was nullified by the tri-

PALACE/ A4

Give us land now, Luisita workers tell government

By Jo Martinez-Clemente and Russell Arador
PDI Central Luzon Desk
and Blanche S. Rivera
in Manila

TARLAC CITY—THE PRESIDENT of the United Luisita Workers' Union (Ulwu) yesterday called on the Department of Agrarian Reform to implement the decision of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council to revoke the stock distribution option at Hacienda Luisita.

"Dapat ipamahagi agad dahil tapos na ang welga at nagdesisyon na ang PARC (The government should immediately distribute the land to the farmers because the strike is over and the PARC has made its decision)," said Ulwu president Rene Galang.

He said the Tuesday decision to acquire the vast sugar estate owned by the family of former President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino for distribution to the farm workers was "a good thing."

Galang also called on military officials to withdraw their troops from the estate, pointing out that both the workers' strike and the stock distribution issue had been resolved.

But if the government acquires the estate, the Cojuangcos will have to take back the benefits given to farm workers for the past 16 years, lawyer Vigor Mendoza said in a phone interview.

"The PARC decision puts us in a

GIVE US/ A6

It's adapt or die for local decor makers

By Daxim L. Lucas
Business

CHRISTMAS SHOULD BE ADEL Disipulo's favorite season, given the line of work he's in. Whatever joy he should be feeling, however, is being muted by worries over his livelihood.

For the last three years, he has been manning a stall in the Dapitan Arcade in Quezon City's Santa Mesa Heights District, selling assorted holiday décor items.

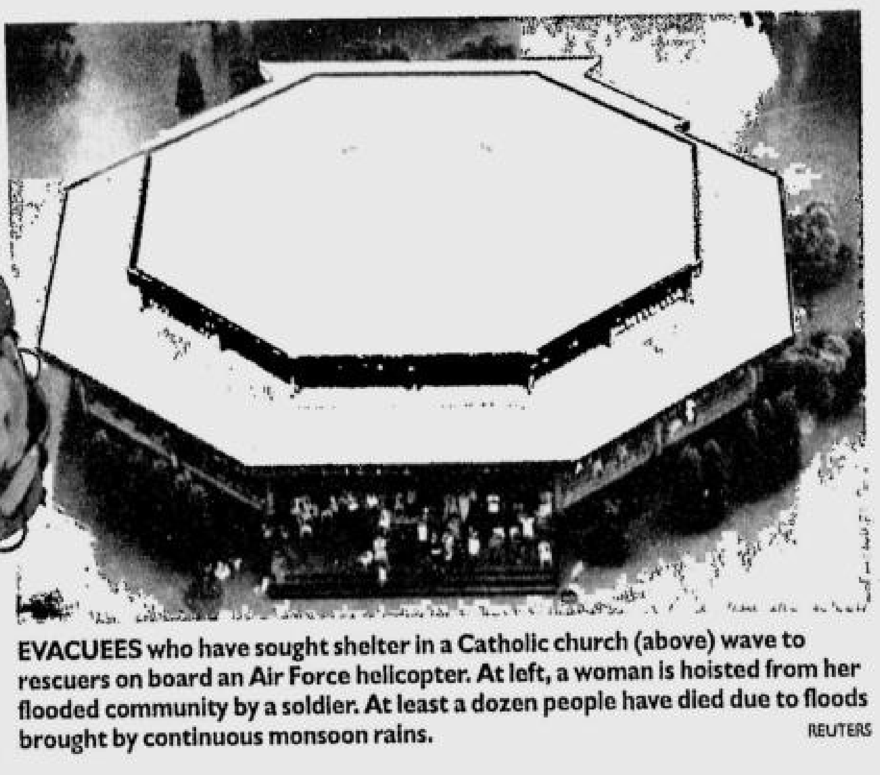
Interviewed only a few days before Christmas—traditionally the busiest time of the year for the shop he oversees—Disipulo candidly said that business was slow.

"Sales are weak nowadays," he

IT'S ADAPT/ A4

STRANDED IN CALAPAN

SOLDIERS help villagers to a helicopter during Sunday's rescue mission in flooded areas in Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro. *(Story on Page A2.)*



EVACUEES who have sought shelter in a Catholic church (above) wave to rescuers on board an Air Force helicopter. At left, a woman is hoisted from her flooded community by a soldier. At least a dozen people have died due to floods brought by continuous monsoon rains. REUTERS

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. There will be widespread rains over Bicol region. The rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY: CYRIL L BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/12/21/05 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

13 get reprieve from execution

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS temporarily stayed the execution of 13 death row inmates including 11 convicted rapists, some of whom raped their own daughters.

The convicts, who were all scheduled to die by injection next month, earned 90-day reprieves.

Ms Arroyo, who opposes capital punishment, has routinely granted stays of execution to death row inmates since coming to power in 2001.

For Jose (not his real name), convicted of raping his own daughter while she was a minor, it was his 12th reprieve. It was the 10th reprieve for two other men convicted of raping their own minor daughters.

Panfilo Quimson, convicted of multiple murder, earned his 10th reprieve, while it was the ninth reprieve for Dindo Pajotal, who killed a man while committing a robbery.

The President also pardoned four male inmates aged at least 70. Three are serving time for rape and the other for homicide. *AFP*

Check in early, PAL passengers urged

THE PHILIPPINE AIRLINES HAS ADVISED passengers on its domestic services, particularly those departing Manila, to check-in much earlier than usual for their flights to avoid the inconvenience of long queues due to the Christmas holiday rush.

PAL said it will open its check-in counters at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Centennial Terminal 2 as early as 1 a.m. daily to accommodate early customers. This is four hours ahead of PAL's first flights of the day, which depart Manila at 5 a.m.

Passengers are normally required to check-in at least two hours ahead of their domestic flight, but the extraordinary volume of passengers this Christmas season, coupled with the strict security checks, has resulted in lengthy lines at the airport.

Accordingly, PAL now requires passengers on domestic flights departing from Manila to check-in at least four hours ahead of the published departure time.

Bishop confirms jueteng's back

By Christian V. Esguerra and Luige A. del Puerto

ARCHBISHOP OSCAR CRUZ IS appalled over the reported resurgence of jueteng less than a year after he resurrected the controversy and linked the First Family to its operations.

The Lingayen-Dagupan prelate took no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo to task for the comeback of the billion-peso underground lottery.

"It is strange that the President has all the power to eradicate jueteng," he said. "Yet this illegal numbers game has [had] more lives [than] a cat."

Cruz, who heads the Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng, confirmed anti-jueteng czar Edward Hagedorn's report that jueteng was back.

While Hagedorn identified only Quezon province, the bishop said the illegal numbers game was actually back in "the same provinces, with the same gambling lords, victimizing the same poor people."

"Jueteng payolas go to the same beneficiaries from the same operators for the same purpose [of protection]," he said.

Cruz said he was baffled how organized jueteng managed to stage a comeback despite Ms Arroyo's much publicized all-out war against it.

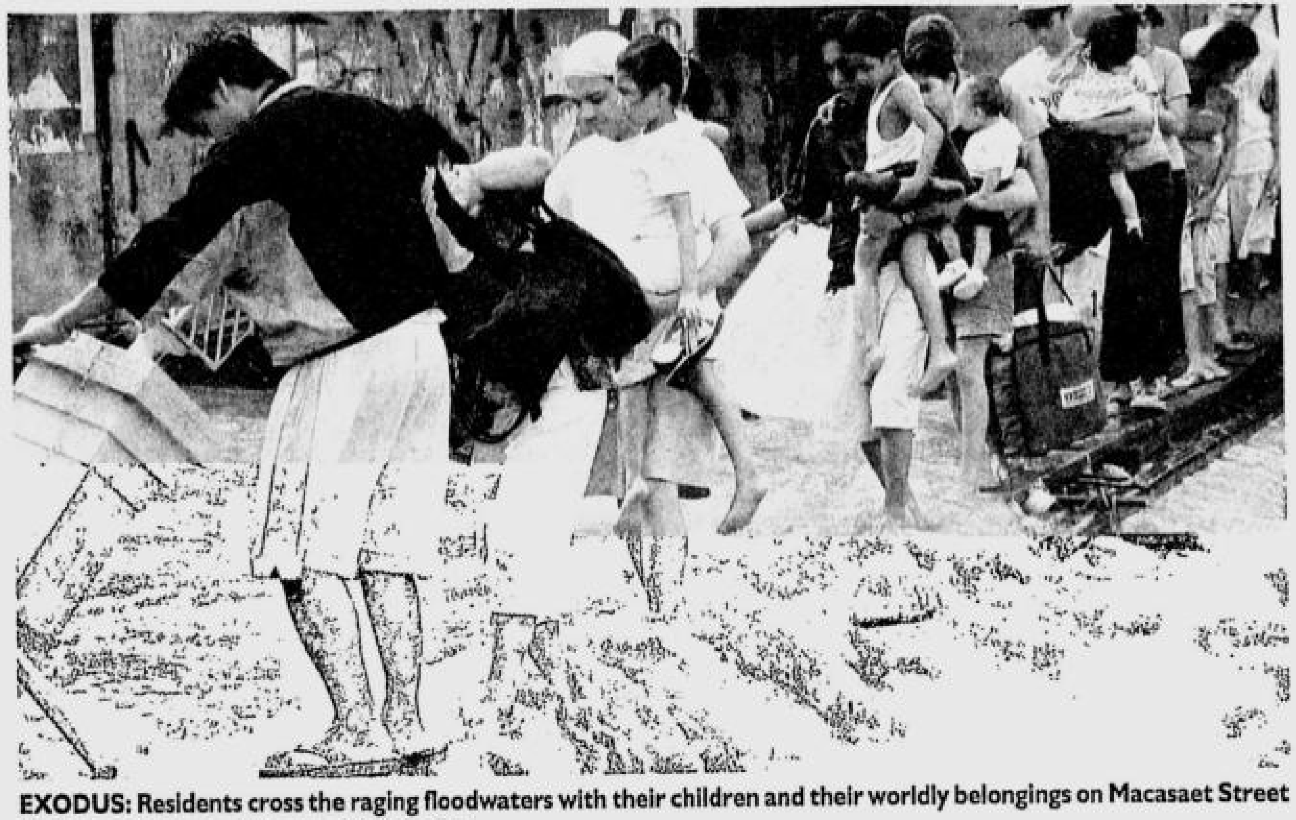
Awaiting word

He said she had command of all law enforcement agencies such as the Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation and even local executives through the Department of Interior and Local Government.

And despite Puerto Princesa Mayor Hagedorn's declaration that jueteng was back, police said they were still awaiting word from the provincial and regional directors before taking action.

"The provincial director will be asked to render his official report on the matter. Within 24 hours, we will ask the regional director to submit the report to the chief PNP for further action," said police spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil.

Bataoil said the police had been "relentless" in their anti-jueteng campaign and warned ground commanders that the one-strike policy still remains.



EXODUS: Residents cross the raging floodwaters with their children and their worldly belongings on Macasaet Street in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro Wednesday.

Mindoro relief, rescue continue

CALAPAN CITY—RESCUE AND RELIEF operations continued in this city, where many parts remained underwater.

More than 20 evacuation centers were still being occupied by flood victims.

Bishop Warlito Cajandig, who convened the local multisectoral council to coordinate relief operations, appealed for donors to make the Edsa Shrine in Quezon City their drop center for relief goods.

The Apostolic Vicariate of Calapan has also asked donors to contact Fr. Geronimo Perez at 0919-5850575 for any assistance they could extend the victims.

Though the rains had temporarily stopped and some evacuees had gone back to their houses, residents remained fearful that floods would continue as the damaged protective dike had not yet been repaired.

The provincial and city governments continued to appeal to travelers to stop using the Strong Republic Nautical Highway.

About 400 commuters have been stranded and this has added to the responsibilities of the local government officials who have to attend to them, said Cesar Tallada, provincial disaster action officer.

Armando Duque, director of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in Southern Tagalog, on Monday said that even big buses could not enter the main roads because of floods. A big portion of the Nautical Highway was also damaged by the floodwaters, he added.

"The Nautical Highway is really impassable. It is better if the ships and other vehicles using the Calapan port to go directly to Caticlan or Roxas because the floods would only trap the passengers," he told the INQUIRER.

He said all the hotels and even resorts in the city were occupied by stranded motorists.

Although the weather has improved, the high tide worsened the situation in the flooded areas of Calapan, he added.

The OCD has directed all shipping lines and bus companies using the roll-on, roll-off (roro) system via the Nautical Highway to divert their trips from this city's port to Roxas Port in Oriental Mindoro and Caticlan port in Aklan.

In Palawan, President Macapagal-Arroyo visited Barangay Sta. Maria, Dumaran town on Tuesday and flew over Roxas town, which was also heavily devastated.

Two bridges in the town have collapsed because of heavy rains brought by the typhoon.

Ms Arroyo promised to give P300,000 for the relief operations. *Madonna T. Virola, Jofelle P. Tesorio and Geraldford P. Ticke, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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AFP says it preempted attack on SEA Games

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE ARREST OF SUSPECTED ABU SAYYAF member Mohammad Guiman, foiled a plot to disrupt this year's Southeast Asian Games, the military said yesterday.

Guiman was arrested on Nov. 30 in Makati, southern military commander Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan said. The Southeast Asian Games were held between Nov. 27 and Dec. 5.

Adan said the arrest "preempted the planned terrorist activities to disrupt the successful conduct" of the Games, but declined to say what those activities were.

Pio de Vera, the alleged No. 2 man of the Rajah Solaiman Movement, which has ties to the Abu Sayyaf Group, was also caught on Dec. 15 in Zamboanga, the military said.

"We have preempted what we believe was a major terror plot by Muslim militants to bomb nightspots in the capital during the Christmas holidays," a senior army intelligence official said.

Guiman and De Vera were finally presented to the media yesterday at Camp Aguinaldo.

Guiman is also a suspect in the Feb. 14 Manila bus bombing claimed by the Abu Sayyaf, which killed four people and left 100 wounded.

"Guiman is responsible for handing over to Khalil Trinidad the explosives used during the Valentine's Day bombings," Adan said. Trinidad is serving a long prison term in connection with the bus attack.

Guiman also had a standing arrest warrant for kidnapping for his alleged role in the Abu Sayyaf raid of the Malaysian resort island of Sipadan in April 2000, Adan said, during which a group of western tourists and Asian resort workers were ransomed off for millions of dollars.

According to a military intelligence officer, De Vera could have replaced Ahmad Islam Santos, founder of the Rajah Solaiman Movement, after Santos was arrested in Zamboanga in October.

De Vera, who was trained in bomb-making by the Southeast Asian terror network Jemaah Islamiyah, allegedly plotted a wave of bombings in Metro Manila during the Christmas holidays, the officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said.

The officer added that De Vera also procured the 600 kg of ammonium nitrate, a substance used for making explosives, seized by intelligence agents in one of the group's safehouses in Quezon City last March. *With reports from AFP, Reuters and AP*

P2M for journalists' fund

By Michael Lim Ubac

TO COUNTER THE COUNTRY'S IMAGE AS THE most dangerous place for journalists, Speaker Jose de Venecia yesterday turned over P2 million to the Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists (FFFJ).

The fund will be used to help solve the killings of journalists in the country and provide small assistance to victims and their families, according to the Speaker.

The money to be drawn from De Venecia's pork barrel, will be jointly managed by the Philippine Press Institute, National Union of Journalists of the Philippines and National Press Club.

"This is in response to a series of headlines of the INQUIRER on the journalist killings. This amount is just for this year; there will be more," said De Venecia who had recently personally contributed P200,000 to the fund.

Half of the P2-million fund, however, will go to the Philippine National Police to put up a bounty on the heads of perpetrators of the killings.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales promised to chip in later.

"We will help but I will not state the amount yet," said Gonzales who was present along with PNP Chief Arturo Lomibao at the formal turn over ceremony at the Grand Tower Condo in Makati City.

Jose Pavia, a member of the FFFW Board of Trustees representing PPI, received the money in behalf of the FFFJ. He said the money was "going to augment what the FFFJ already has."

Pavia said that it was high time that we "walk the talk," short for providing more than just "moral support" to journalists wounded or killed in the line of duty and their families.

"We will be there to provide moral support to the victims and the families," said Pavia. "But to go to the provinces, we need funds."

De Venecia explained that the amount was just the first of a "series of funds" to uproot the culture of violence in the country which already claimed the lives of 99 Filipino journalists since 1986.

The latest victim was George Benaojan, senior staff reporter of dyBB "Bantay Radyo," who was killed last Dec. 2 in Cebu.

De Venecia said the initial amount should be used for "quick response" so that officials of media groups based in Manila had the means to go to the country once a killing occurred, or monitor the progress of police investigation and subsequent trial.

PALACE REPLY

'Those who say we're not free are out of touch with reality'

By Christine O. Avendaño and Philip Tubeza

BUNYE

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY invited an independent monitoring group to come to the country and see for itself how free the nation was.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye yesterday made the invitation to Freedom House following a ratings downgrade it gave the Philippines in its annual report rating every nation in the world as "free, partly free or not free."

"They can see for themselves how Constitutional democracy works, how the media works and how the people freely express themselves," Bunye said in a statement.

As if to prove this point, Bunye chided the monitoring body.

"Those who say that there is no freedom in the Philippines are out of touch with reality," he said.

From its previous rating of "free," the Philippines was rated as "partly free" by Freedom House based on what the body said were allegations of electoral fraud, corruption and government intimidation of opposition members that were found to be "credible."

The body's survey covered the period from Dec.1, 2004 to Nov. 30, 2005.

Lawmakers reacted to the downgrade along party lines.

Administration lawmakers described as baseless and unreliable

Lakas-CMD Representatives Eduardo Zialcita (Parañaque) and Isidoro Real (Zamboanga del Sur) said the downgrade was unfair since it was based only on "perception and allegations of poll fraud, and not concrete evidence or scientific basis."

"It is a sad fact that in Philippine elections, there is always no loser because everyone who lost his or her bid claims to have been cheated. Freedom House must realize this sad reality," said Zialcita.

He scored Freedom House for "overstepping on an issue" that he said rested solely on the Presidential Electoral Tribunal.

"The poll allegations issue is not within Freedom House's jurisdiction especially that it is a foreign organization. The international freedom rating group cannot change the fact that PET has closed the doors on this issue," he said.

Zialcita said the PET's decision junking the poll protest against President Arroyo may have been based on technicalities, but "the public cannot twist the rules just to favor a candidate who is already dead or his wife who has no legal personality to pursue the protest against the President."

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero, however, said that the downgrade confirmed what the opposition "had been saying for a long time."

He said that besides the "unresolved charges" of cheating against the President, her administration's calibrated preemptive response (CPR) policy that had led to violence during protest rallies, and her order requiring executive officials to get her permission before attending legislative inquiries should also be blamed for the downgrade.

The opposition had accused the administration of implementing a "creeping Martial Law" after Congress threw out the impeachment complaint against Ms Arroyo.

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IN THE KNOW

Gov't-Piatco amended agreement and supplements

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) signed on Nov. 26, 1998, an amended and restated concession agreement (Arca), which modified the provisions of the 1997 concession agreement pertaining to the:

- Definition of "certificate of completion."
- Special obligations of the government.
- Exclusivity of the franchise.
- Concessionaire's assignment of its interest in the development facility.
- Proceeds of the concessionaire's insurance.
- Government's temporary takeover of operations.
- Taxes and duties that may be imposed on the concessionaire.
- Periodic adjustment of public utility fees.
- Termination of the contract.
- Venue of arbitration proceedings in case of dispute.

Three supplements to the Arca were later signed by Piatco and the Estrada administration.

The first, signed on Aug. 27, 1999, amended sections with respect to the definition of "gross revenues," the obligation of the Manila International Airport Authority to provide funds for the maintenance of its airport facilities, additional special obligations of the government, the disposition of terminal fees, and the payments of percentage share in gross revenues.

It also had stipulations regarding the construction of a surface road to connect the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminals 2 and 3, swapping of obligations between Piatco and the government regarding the improvement of Sales Road, and timetable changes.

The second supplement, signed on Sept. 4, 2000, had provisions concerning the clearing of subterranean structures at the construction site, scope of work, time extensions, costs and losses resulting from the existence of the structures, and Piatco's additional obligations regarding the structures.

The third supplement, signed on June 22, 2001, carried stipulations on the concessionaire's obligations in constructing the surface road. *Cyril L. Bonabente, PDI Research*

Source: May 2003 Supreme Court decision

Appointment of Panganiban draws praise

From page A1

"At the same time, Justice Puno is also highly respected and since he will be staying longer in the Supreme Court, I believe that after 11 months, he will be a logical successor to Chief Justice Panganiban," he added.

Wisdom questioned

Sen. Francis Pangilinan questioned the wisdom of Ms Arroyo doing away with the seniority rule in naming Panganiban to take over from Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. who retired on Tuesday at the age of 70.

Puno, who retires in 2010, is senior to Panganiban. Under the seniority rule, Puno was next in line to succeed Davide.

4th time in history

"This is only the fourth time in the history of the Supreme Court that the tradition of seniority was not observed," said Pangilinan, a member of the Judicial Bar Council which screens jurists' credentials.

He said tradition was broken in the Supreme Court's 104-year history during extraordinary times—the American colonial rule, the Japanese occupation and the Marcos dictatorship. He said the question being asked in legal circles was whether this would "augur well for the court and the nation."

However, Supreme Court spokesperson Ismael Khan pointed out that ex-President Corazon Aquino also disregarded the seniority rule and appointed Justice Pedro Yap on April 18, 1988. Yap served for less than three months.

An eminent choice

Pangilinan conceded that Panganiban was a credible choice and asked that he be given proper budgetary support to continue with judicial reforms started by Davide.

Malacañang defended Ms Arroyo's selection of Panganiban, who took his oath yesterday as the new Chief Justice before the President, his family, and former Supreme Court chiefs Davide and Andres Narvasa.

"It is with good reason that the President has chosen the course of action she has done," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita in his weekly news conference. "Let's give it to the President, that's her prerogative," he told reporters.

He said Panganiban was a "luminary" himself in his field and had a good record.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo swears into office Artemio V. Panganiban as the new Chief Justice in Malacañang. At right is Panganiban's wife Elenita. LYN RILLON

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Panganiban was an "eminent" choice for the top Supreme Court post and this view was "shared by most luminaries and practitioners in the legal community, as well as other sectors."

Bunye said Panganiban had "an important role to play in leading the judiciary at a time of national transformation and renewal."

Nation fortunate

Sen. Joker Arroyo, chair of the Senate committee on justice, also said the country was "fortunate and safe" with Panganiban in these times of "uncertainty and peril."

"The country cannot afford to be without an upright Supreme Court," Arroyo said in a statement. He said the "high court cannot relax on its duty to enforce the Bill of Rights against unfair government intrusion."

Arroyo obviously referred to pending questions before the Supreme Court, including the constitutionality of Executive Order No. 464 prohibiting the attendance of government executives before congressional inquiries without the President's consent.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said Ms Arroyo's decision did not help erase doubts that Panganiban was appointed because he helped install her to the presidency following the ouster of President Joseph Estrada in January 2001.

"Without taking anything against Justice Panganiban—he has excellent credentials—people might think that he was appointed because he is close to her. That would not be good," Escudero said.

Exporting revolving door

He also criticized the President for "exporting" to the Supreme Court her revolving door policy, or appointing agency heads who would only serve short terms.

He said this would prevent the appointees from effectively reforming the agencies they head or from ensuring that agencies would have long-term policy goals.

"This does not bode well for the judiciary. [The policy] did not serve the Armed Forces of the Philippines well and it might not also serve the Supreme Court well," Escudero said.

Administration lawmakers, however, lauded Panganiban's appointment and called on the public to respect the President's decision.

In a statement, Lakas-CMD Representatives Salacnib Baterina (Ilocos Sur) and Antonio Cuenco (Cebu City) said that while seniority may be a time-honored consideration and tradition for picking the Chief Justice, the President "had her own reasons in choosing Panganiban which every one must respect and abide by."

Baterina said they were confident that Panganiban would surmount the daunting tasks of asserting the independence of the judiciary at all times and insulating it from politics. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño, Michael Lim Ubac, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Armand Nocum, and Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Palace set to pay Piatco ₱3B soonest

From page A1

bunal last year, and the government promptly expropriated the terminal.

"It's not a negative for the government because we must pay [Piatco] to perfect our ownership and proceed with our plans," Ermita said.

He said the government got wind of the high court's decision two to three weeks before its release.

Ermita said the government was targeting an opening date for Naia 3 in March, and hoping to raise money through the Development Bank of the Philippines to fully reimburse Piatco.

The contract between the government and Piatco was signed during the term of President Fidel V. Ramos, and not during that of ousted President Joseph Estrada.

But the contract was amended during Estrada's term. *(See "In the Know" above.)*

Warning

In a press statement, Benipayo raised apprehension that Piatco might not share the money with the German investor Fraport AG and Japanese firms Takenaka and Asahikosan, the principal builder and supplier, respectively, of the project.

"If Piatco is paid directly, it is not certain, considering that Fraport votes only 30 percent of the shares, that Piatco will give Fraport its correct share in the net proceeds of the expropriation," Benipayo said.

He said the Office of the Solicitor General would file a motion for reconsideration on the matter.

Citing news reports quoting Piatco executives as saying that the government should pay its obligation to the builder and supplier, Benipayo said this indicated that Piatco had "no intention of sharing the just compensation with the unpaid builder and supplier, and even with Fraport."

"In fairness to them and to the Republic, and in accordance with the law, whatever just compensation is paid should be reserved for the settlement of obligations to preferred claimants, who shall intervene and present evidence on their claims before the expropriation court ...," he said.

London judgment

Benipayo noted that in an urgent manifestation to the court on Dec. 12, the government drew attention to a London court judgment awarding the amount of more than $82 million to Takenaka and Asahikosan.

The London judgment is part of the Japanese firms' claim of nonpayment against Piatco, which, they said, had stopped payment to them since 2001.

Thus, Benipayo said, the Supreme Court "erred in completely ignoring our urgent manifestation that there is an unpaid builder as well as supplier of the terminal, with preferred liens on the just compensation."

Benipayo raised doubt that the business community would consider it "fair" if the Japanese firms were not paid, and Piatco, "an apparently insolvent company," got the P3 billion.

"Will the international community consider it fair if the claims of Fraport are completely ignored in favor of the local partners who may have played a crucial yet damaging role leading to the fall of the project?" he said.

Benipayo insisted that the government had always maintained that it would pay for the expropriation of Naia 3, "whoever are entitled to the same, in the degree and proportion to which they are entitled to just compensation."

It's adapt or die for local decor makers

From page A1

said. "The decline has been sharp."

Disipulo observed that there were more window shoppers than actual buyers.

He noted that while his shop used to sell over P12,000 worth of Christmas décor a day in recent years, this season's sales have paled in comparison, although he declined to give specific figures.

Disipulo laments that he has stopped offering items that used to be in demand, like "*parol*" (Christmas lanterns) from Bicol, made from abaca fiber, because demand has dried up.

'A dying tradition'

A cursory look around Disipulo's shop and the adjoining stalls reveals a pattern that is being repeated in stores all over the country: the local holiday décor industry is reeling from cheap imported alternatives from low-cost producers like China.

The result is a threat to the survival of not just an industry, but a Filipino tradition, as imported Christmas lights and plastic decorations ease out handcrafted local items.

Businessman Sergio R. Ortiz-Luis Jr. admits that the problem of Chinese products being dumped in the local markets is serious.

"Local products simply have no way of competing with these imports," he said, citing the high cost of local inputs, including labor and raw materials.

To top it off, practically all of these Christmas décor overflowing in the stalls of Divisoria are smuggled into the country, said Ortiz-Luis, president of the Philippine Exporters Confederation.

Ortiz-Luis points out, however, that these Chinese goods are so cheap, that even if the customs bureau imposes a 100-percent tariff rate on them, they would still end up cheaper because they cost lower than the raw materials for their local counterparts.

Ortiz-Luis is quick to single out 168 Mall on Reina Regente in the Divisoria area where many of these Chinese-made holiday décor and other cheap goods can be bought at rock-bottom prices. He said even mall giant SM Shoemart was complaining about competition from 168 Mall.

Price as motivator

Christmas lights, for example, retailed at three 100-bulb sets for P100 during the previous holiday season. Today, four of these sets sell for P100. In SM or National Bookstore, one set sells for P129—a whopping 416 percent price difference.

"Many of these products from China, especially the electrical Christmas décors, have not passed our quality tests," Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said in an interview. "I cannot argue with consumers when they are concerned with saving money, but I try to make them understand that the risks are not worth it."

He said he visited Divisoria last week to stress this point to shoppers. But sales at 168 Mall remain brisk.

"We really have to address this issue of dumping," he said. "We've seized so much smuggled goods already, but it has hardly made a dent."

Steve Dagundon migrated to Manila from the Visayas three years ago to sell electric *capiz* lanterns.

"Sales have dropped by about one-third," he said.

Dagundon said he understood how his *capiz* lanterns—each one a work of art—could be upstaged in the marketplace by cheaper Chinese imports. While his lanterns sell at P1,500 apiece, plastic lanterns from China with lights controlled by integrated circuit chips sell for as low as P150 each in Divisoria—a mere tenth of Dagundon's selling price.

Changing with the times

"That's why many people come here, not to buy but for repair of defective lamps," he said.

Strangely, however, Dagundon's shop displayed various *capiz* lanterns of smaller diameters and conspicuously marked "110V."

He explained that he was gradually shifting his focus to products that US-based *balikbayans* could take with them to the United States.

"They use 110 volts in the US," he said, referring to the US voltage system. He added that he also had packaging materials ready for *balikbayans* to be able to ship these capiz lanterns with minimal risk of damage.

Dagundon's strategy is something that finds favor with Philexport's Ortiz-Luis, who said that local Christmas décor makers should shift from cheap, low-value added goods—China's traditional manufacturing specialty—and move up the production chain into unique products which can command higher prices.

Indeed, taking this leap of faith, as Dagundon has, may be the only way for some 180 Christmas décor makers and 250,000 jobs to survive the Chinese onslaught.

"In the end, they have to compete on value and not on price," Ortiz-Luis said. "It's the only way."

Santa Clauses: Who's naughty, who's nice

From page A1

Diaz at a pub in Parañaque City after concerned citizens reported that Diaz's pockets had suspicious-looking bulges.

The lawmen wear Santa Claus hats and are assigned to patrol the malls and other crowded areas. Some 200 of them have been deployed during the holiday season.

Supt. Ronald Estilles, city police chief, said Diaz was drinking with friends at Encantadia KTV Bar on Sucat Highway, Barangay San Antonio, at about 4:30 a.m. yesterday when he was collared by Santa cops in the area.

"The bulges were indeed suspicious. He had three guns," Estilles said.

Recovered from the 46-year-old businessman from Muntinlupa City were a .45-cal. pistol with a magazine loaded with six bullets, a 9-mm Browning pistol with nine bullets, and a .38 cal. revolver with five bullets, police said.

No license

"When investigated, the suspect failed to present any pertinent documents regarding the three firearms recovered in his possession," Estilles said.

Diaz claimed that he brought the guns because of threats to his life, the police chief said.

"But he could not give more details because he was very drunk," said Estilles.

The suspect's companions escaped, police said.

Estilles reminded all gun owners not to bring firearms in bars. "Anything can happen when they get drunk," he said.

Chief Supt. Wilfredo Garcia, Southern Police District director, said the police would continue to investigate Diaz as "he could be engaged in other criminal activities."

Diaz will be charged with three counts of illegal possession of firearms.

Santa robber

Not all Santas are good. Reports of "Bad Santas" breaking the law or otherwise wreaking havoc have been circulating in other parts of the world.

Armed with a gun, a man in a Santa outfit held up a furniture store in the German town of Ludwigshafen on Saturday and forced two cashiers to open the safe. He filled his sack with cash, locked the two women in the safe and escaped.

He is still on the loose, but police in Tuebingen were able to nab a bank robber armed with a machine gun in a Santa costume with the aid of an infrared camera and helicopter. They found him hiding in a ditch in a nearby forest.

"The machine gun was fake," a police spokesperson said. Dressed in a Santa cap, beard and wearing sunglasses, he was wanted for stealing 500,000 euros (P32 million) in four separate bank robberies.

Santa flasher

One Santa was stopped by police for driving 150 kph on a northern German motorway, 50 kph over the speed limit.

"He said he was in a rush because he still had packages to deliver," said a spokesperson for the police. They gave Santa a fine and took away his license.

Last week, an inebriated half-naked Santa disrupted a Christmas market in Dabringhausen before police intervened.

In New York, one man fed up with the growing commercial aspect of Christmas set up a ghoulish life-sized Santa holding a severed doll's head in front of his house, local media said.

Those incidents paled in comparison to what happened in Auckland on Saturday when 40 drunken Santas rampaged through the city center, stealing from stores and assaulting security guards in protest against Christmas becoming too commercial.

In Britain, police said they were looking for a Santa acting suspiciously—a flasher who exposed himself to women.

Officers in Swanage on the south coast of England said the flasher had struck a number of times since Dec. 6, and a week later exposed himself while wearing a Santa Claus outfit.

A British agency has issued a code of conduct to root out substandard Santas.

Santa swears

"Santa is a magical and cuddly man, not a fat, smelly slob," said James Lovell of the Ministry of Fun agency in London. "He must not smell of drink or body odor."

But a foul-mouthed Santa in London nevertheless made children cry by swearing at them recently, local media reported.

In Sweden, one Santa set on fire a 13-meter straw ram built by the town fathers by shooting burning arrows into it.

Last Christmas, a shopping center in South Wales installed a webcam dubbed "Santacam" in its grotto to overcome parents' concerns after several high-profile pedophile cases in Britain.

With a Reuters report

Parties defer decision on ConCom's 'no-election' option

WARY OF THE MOUNTING OPPOSITION to the scrapping of the 2007 midterm elections, major political parties have decided to defer a decision on the Consultative Commission's controversial proposal, Speaker Jose de Venecia said.

Party leaders instead focused on the big picture—the urgency of a shift to a parliamentary system.

"The party heads unanimously agreed to support Charter reform but the proposal (on extending the terms of elected officials) should not benefit legislators," said De Venecia who chaired a meeting on Tuesday of the Conference of Philippine Political Parties.

De Venecia said the coalition party heads would discuss "more extensively" with their individual parties the controversial proposal from the 55-member ConCom, which submitted its recommendations for constitutional amendments to the President last Friday.

He said the party heads had agreed "to push the momentum for constitutional reform and set the stage for approval of a unicameral parliamentary system" and an economic action plan to revitalize the economy.

It was the third meeting this year of the conference standing committee and the theme was national unity.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who represented the ruling Lakas-CMD party with Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and former senator Heherson Alvarez, said national unity meant eliminating "considerations of party ideology and heeding the call to move the country forward."

To resolve the impasse over Charter change, administration legislators said President Macapagal-Arroyo should convene the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) where Senate and the House members could conduct a "constructive" dialogue.

The Speaker and Senate President Franklin Drilon should take the lead in threshing out the contentious issues, said Representatives Mauricio Domogan and Exequiel Javier, who are vice chairs of the House committee on constitution amendments.

"She can involve herself in the issue since she allowed the creation of ConCom. But I believe Senator Drilon's call for the Palace to trash the ConCom's No-El recommendation is out of place because we have to bring the issue to discussions yet," Javier said.

Domogan said Cha-cha must not be held hostage by "differences," lamenting that lawmakers had been "embroiled in too many political intrigues and it will be worse if the Cha-cha initiative will paralyzed by distrust."

Archbishop Oscar Cruz said the proposal to scrap the 2007 elections and extend the terms of all elected officials reflected the Arroyo administration's "addiction, greed and deceit."

In a strongly worded statement, Cruz said Ms Arroyo had no business tinkering with Charter change as she has yet to answer unresolved questions about her legitimacy.

The militant Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) described the ConCom's proposals as anti-worker and pro-elite.

APL national chair Danny Edralin called on workers to oppose Charter change as it would, among other things, prolong the tenure of the Arroyo administration.

The moderate Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) also opposed the "no-election" proposal, citing adverse public opinion. *Michael Lim Ubac, Jerome Aning and Christian V. Esguerra*

Special session eyed for Cha-cha

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo had agreed to convene a special session of Congress as early as January next year to allow both houses to convene as a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution, Speaker Jose de Venecia said yesterday.

"The President is agreeable to call a joint special session for this purpose," said De Venecia at a press conference in Makati City.

About 12 senators, including Senators Edgardo Angara, Manuel Villar, Jose Ponce Enrile, Ralph Recto, Lito Lapid and even opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, would be willing to attend the joint session, said the Speaker.

He explained that the special session would be called to discuss legislation "including other matters" such as Charter reform.

In fact, the constituent assembly could be called even without a special session, said De Venecia.

"On our own, Senator Angara believes there will be enough senators to attend the joint session. We can take the normal route," he said, referring to a joint session presided over by both the Speaker and the Senate President.

Quoting Angara in his statement during the meeting of political parties on Monday, the Speaker said: "We believe there will be a majority of senators who will attend the constituent assembly."

By majority, he meant 12 of the present 23-member upper chamber. (The 24th seat was vacated by then Sen. Noli de Castro who ran and won as vice president in 2004).

De Venecia said there's no stopping Charter change, strongly belying "speculation" that proposal of the Malacañang-created Consultative Commission to scrap the 2007 midterm elections had in effect derailed the so-called Cha-cha express.

"To those who are opposed to the (proposed specific amendments)... let them so state. But what's their alternative?" he said.

"If they don't like our move for a unicameral system, then they can state so; if they don't want the lifting of term limits they should so state; if they don't wish to lift the economic restrictions so that we allow this major, massive flow of investment, then state so; if they don't want elections every five years, subsidy for political parties so that we can reduce political corruption, state so; and then what is their alternative?" he said.

On Monday, the heads of major political parties—Lakas-CMD, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, Nationalist People's Coalition, Liberal Party, Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino and the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas—had unanimously agreed to support Charter reform during the meeting of Conference of Philippine Political Parties.

"That is a large majority of the major political parties," said De Venecia. However, he said the party heads deferred decision on the ConCom no-elections proposal to give them time to make consultations.

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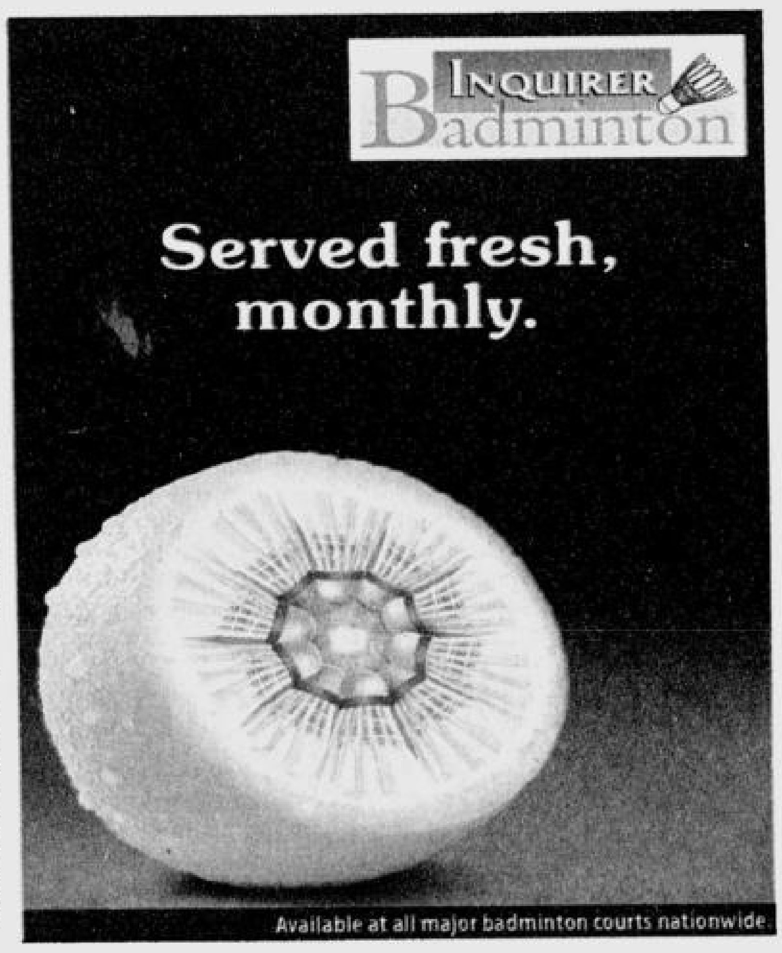

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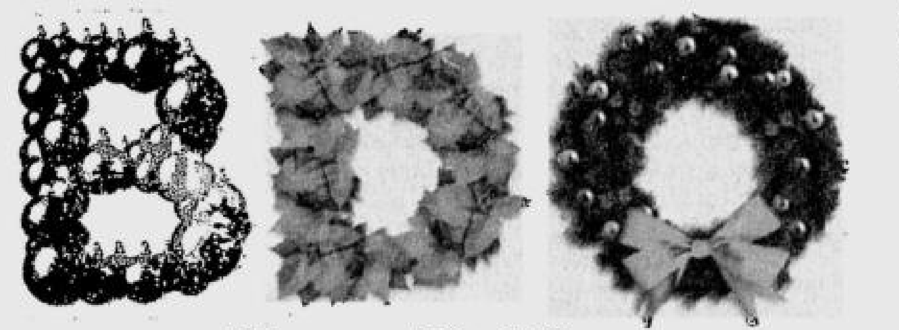

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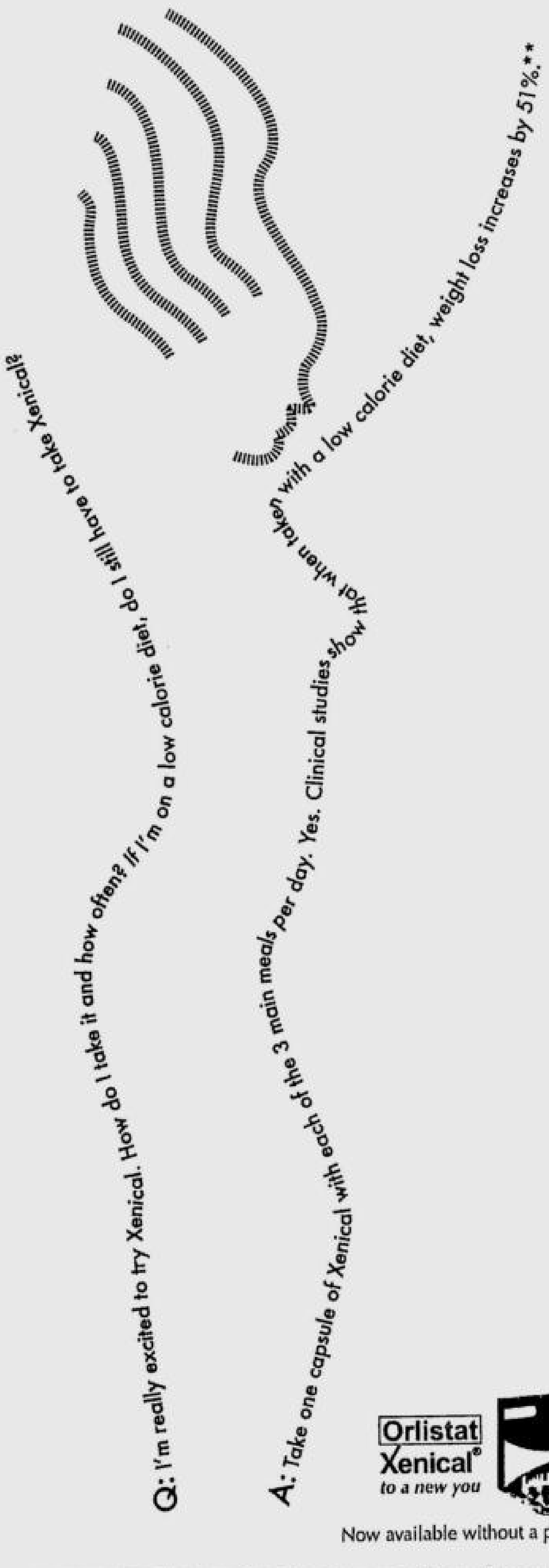

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*IMS (PADDS), Dec. 2004 **John Foreyt, PH D, Kristine Napier M.P.H., RD and Louis Aronne, M.D., F.A.C.P., The Xenical Advantage: How to use the remarkable new FDA-Approved drug to lose weight faster and keep it off Safely and Effectively (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1999), 22-23 ***Medical Journal of Diabetes Care Vol. 27, No. 1, Jan 2004 issue by: Jarl S. Torgerson MD, PHD, et al

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How do I get started? Weigh yourself, measure your waistline and set your goal (ideal weight). Have the right attitude to eat right. Avoid fatty and high calorie food to maximize the Xenical weight loss effect.

Palace: GMA is not afraid of Lopezes

From page A1

uidation of the P42 billion in collectibles through annual payments of P14 billion by Meralco for three years.

But the private distribution firm, which supplies electricity to 4 million homes and businesses in Metro Manila and surrounding areas, has said it only owes P15 billion to Napocor.

"Firstly, let me state for the record that there is no such thing as a P42-billion debt of Meralco to Napocor," Meralco chair Manuel Lopez yesterday told a news conference.

"Secondly, there is no such thing as a longstanding dispute between Meralco and Napocor because the dispute was laid to rest by a settlement agreement signed in July 2003."

In his press briefing, however, Ermita said the government was bent on collecting the P42 billion from Meralco.

"They (Meralco) should pay up. The only thing under review is what is the best modality to offset the payment that would make it easier for the general public to benefit from this," he said.

In realm of possibilities

Ermita said a government takeover of Meralco through a debt-for-equity deal was "in the realm of possibilities being considered in settling the issue."

"But it has to be reasonable, it has to be legal. It should be figures that are validated by previous studies and assessments by appropriate agencies," he said.

Ermita said the government had been moving to validate the exact amount of Meralco's obligations with Napocor and the ERC for some time now. "Our strategy is to first determine the correct figure and the rationale behind that figure," he said.

The executive secretary also doused speculation that politics had motivated the President in pressing Meralco to pay its obligations.

"They will always put that motive (in whatever we do). But you know the President, she always rises above these problems. Like Hacienda Luisita, people think that just because former President Aquino (is against the President) that this is all part of a payback," Ermita said in reference to an agrarian reform body's decision to parcel out Hacienda Luisita to the farmers. *(See story on front page.)*

He said the President was not afraid of retribution from the Lopez family, which also controls the ABS-CBN media empire. "I don't know why we should be afraid of a backlash. The important thing is to do what is right."

Ermita said that even billionaires should be made to pay their obligations. "No one is above the law, that is the most important thing."

Asked if Ms Arroyo had weighed the implications of a government takeover of a private company, Ermita said: "I'm sure she took into account all political considerations in her move to press the takeover. But we should not put malice into that. If that (Meralco owed Napocor P42 billion) is the truth, we cannot hide it from the people especially if they know that there is something we can do to lower prices."

Ermita said there had been no personal discussions between Ms Arroyo and the Lopez family on the matter. "They are the interested party, they should make the arrangement. The President is open to talks with anybody," he said.

Scaring away investors

Two business leaders—Guillermo Luz, executive director of the Makati Business Club, and Donald Dee, president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry—yesterday warned that a government takeover of Meralco was unnecessary. They said this would adversely affect the local business climate and drive away investors.

In his news conference, Lopez also said the Spanish-based utility Union Fenosa, which has significant stake in Meralco, was getting a "little restless" about its investment in the Philippines.

Lopez said officials at Union Fenosa told him during his visit to Spain in October that they were considering selling the stake in Meralco.

"I was able to convince them that it was not the right time and that we expect things to get better," Lopez said. "Right now, they are holding on, but I can tell you that there's a lot of disappointment on their part in making that $200 million investment six years ago."

The Lopez family and its companies account for 35.77 percent of Meralco's total common shares. About 22.84 percent is owned by First Philippine Union Fenosa Inc., a joint venture between Union Fenosa and First Philippine Holdings (FPHC), a subsidiary of the Lopez-owned Benpres Holdings Corp. The rest is owned by the Meralco Pension Fund, FPHC and various Lopez family members.

The government already controls 15.23 percent of Meralco, through shares listed under the Republic of the Philippines, the Social Security System, the Land Bank of the Philippines, the Home Development Mutual Fund and the Philippine Health Insurance Corp.

As of September 2005, 39.55 percent of Meralco's common shares were held by PCD Nominee Corp., broken down into 25.93 percent in Filipino shares and 13.62 in non-Filipino shares.

Napocor sale

Meralco also warned that the controversy over unpaid power bills, sparked by INQUIRER reports the government was studying the conversion of Meralco's debt into equity to take over the firm, might affect investor interest in the sale of Napocor.

Debt-laden and money-losing Napocor, the single biggest strain on the government's finances, hopes to raise $4 billion to $5 billion by selling dozens of its generating plants and leasing its nationwide electricity grid.

Despite Ermita's pronouncements, Trade Secretary Peter Favila denied that the government was planning to take over Meralco.

"Somebody just leaked this … which is not good," Favila told ANC, a television station controlled by the Lopez family.

"I don't think even the President herself would tolerate this kind of development," he said.

Meralco said that in July 2003, it entered into a settlement agreement with Napocor for P20 billion. Early this year, it filed a petition with the ERC to bring down the amount of its unpaid power bills to Napocor to P14.3 billion.

Napocor's claim stemmed from a supply contract with Meralco from 1994 to 2004. The deal required Meralco to buy a minimum volume of electricity from Napocor whether it used it or not.

Meralco president Jesus Francisco said his firm used less electricity from 2001 to 2004 due to slower-than-forecast growth in the economy and supplies from independent power producers.

Meralco expects electricity sales to grow 2.5 percent in volume in 2006 from flat sales this year. Its sales grew 3.5 percent in 2004 to 24,660 gigawatt hours.

"There is no provision in the agreement for conversion to equity of Meralco of any amount to be paid to Napocor," the Meralco board said in a separate statement. *With reports from Abigail L. Ho, Ronnel W. Domingo and Reuters*

How Meralco incurred huge debt to gov't

From page A1

acted to privatize Napocor and encourage competition. It provides for transition contracts to be in place within six months of the law's passage. These contracts would cover the period from June 2001 until the distribution sector's full deregulation, which the law says should come as early as 2004.

Feb. 8, 2002—Napocor bills Meralco around P6.7 billion for the period covering Dec. 25, 2001 to Jan. 25, 2002. This figure includes a P2.1-billion penalty for contracted but unconsumed demand and energy. Meralco has lessened its dependence on Napocor by getting energy from independent power producers (IPPs), reportedly at the prodding of the government itself during the term of President Fidel Ramos, which ended in 1998.

Feb. 20, 2002—Meralco gives Napocor a formal notice of termination of the CSE, effective 30 days after receipt of the letter. Meralco says it was penalized without basis and notes that Napocor failed to comply with material provisions of the contract. Napocor says it is willing to accept payment of the undisputed portion of the bill (around P4.5 billion) and that it is open to further discussions on the penalty. This cycle would repeat itself in subsequent billing periods.

March 2002—Napocor insists that Meralco stick to the CSE despite the operation of Lopez-owned power plants.

May 2002—President Macapagal-Arroyo reduces Napocor's Purchased Power Agreement (PPA) charge from P1.25/kWh to P0.40/kWh, reducing Napocor's revenues by P0.85/kWh.

January 2003—Meralco president Jesus P. Francisco claims that since Meralco and Napocor officials are negotiating a transition supply contract, the CSE has been rendered ineffective.

March 24, 2003—Meralco says it has suffered damages and losses amounting to P8.3 billion because of Napocor's alleged violations of the CSE—not turning over sales from directly connected customers in Meralco territory; not dispatching Meralco IPPs at their minimum energy quantity levels, and imposing various extra charges on Meralco and its IPPs. Meralco says this is on top of around $27 million caused by the delay in putting up a transmission line for independent power producer Quezon Power Philippines Ltd. (QPPL).

July 15, 2003—After more than a year of citing each other's alleged violations, Meralco and Napocor sign a compromise settlement to resolve their differences. Among other things, Meralco agrees to pay Napocor P27.5 billion only, or the equivalent of 18,222 GWh (instead of the original 60,092 GWh) at P1.51/kWh. Napocor agrees to give Meralco a credit line of around P7.5 billion due to the delayed completion of transmission facilities as well as for energy corresponding to Napocor's sales to directly connected customers in Meralco territory. The credit will bring the net amount to P20.5 billion only, payable over a period of five to six years or until December 2009. As to where Meralco would source the money to pay the debt, the settlement expressly states that it would be recovered from Meralco customers.

Sept. 10, 2003—The Freedom from Debt Coalition urges the energy sector to junk the "unjust" settlement, saying Meralco's unilateral decision to buy less energy has pressured Napocor to charge more, particularly for its Purchased Power Adjustment (PPA). It also questions why Meralco customers would have to shoulder the cost of energy they did not use, and why Meralco's practice of getting its energy from IPPs which charged an average of P4.21/kWh compared to Napocor's regular P2.46/kWh was being tolerated. It notes that these IPPs, including Quezon Power Philippines Ltd. in Mauban, Quezon, and First Philippine Holdings Corp. in Sta. Rita, Batangas, and San Lorenzo, Pampanga, are sister companies of Lopez-owned Meralco.

Nov. 23, 2005—Gualberto J. dela Llana, a private lawyer who had been nominated to replace Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo, files a case of plunder and graft against Napocor and Meralco. Dela Llana argues that Napocor should have charged Meralco P2.46/kWh instead of P1.51/kWh, for a total of P44.8 billion.

December 2005—A top Malacañang official tells the INQUIRER that since July, the government has been considering using the Meralco debt—pegged at P42 billion (the aforementioned P44.8 billion minus some waived charges)—to buy more shares in Meralco and bring down the cost of electricity. *Jamie Alarcon, PDI Research*

Give us land now, Luisita workers tell government

From page A1

quandary … ," said Mendoza, spokesperson of Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI), which manages the 4,915-hectare estate. "What will we do with what we gave the farmers under the SDO? They will have to give it back because there is a loss of contract."

Mendoza said the PARC decision would effectively cancel the employer-employee relationship.

He said it would also hamper the efforts to bring normalcy to the estate, which ended a 13-month strike only two weeks ago.

More than 10 workers and their supporters from various organizations were killed in separate incidents while the strike was ongoing from November 2004 to December 2005.

"How are we to proceed in bringing back normalcy to the HLI? The company is still trying to resolve what to do … We're reviewing the consequences of the PARC decision," Mendoza said.

Shares instead of land

Under the stock distribution option approved by the PARC in 1989, farm workers received shares of stock instead of land.

But critics said the scheme only helped the owners prolong their hold on the land and did not lift the workers from poverty.

There are 3,274 home lots given to the farm workers under the scheme.

In a report submitted to Congress last year, HLI said it had spent P3 billion in total salaries, wages and benefits for the estate's farm workers from 1989 to 2004, including the P50 million it shelled out annually for hospitalization benefits.

Salary and educational loans and rice rations given in 2003 and 2004 alone totaled P37 million, it said.

"That will have to be returned. So what will happen, will they be driven out of their homes? It's quite messy and complicated. What we're trying to avoid is *yung magkagulo* (that there will be violence). There's a level of uncertainty now," Mendoza said in a mix of Filipino and English.

He said HLI was working in two arenas to address the issue—preparing for a court battle questioning the PARC decision and conducting dialogues with farmers.

Capability to pay

Mendoza questioned the government's capability to compensate HLI for acquiring the sugar estate.

Citing the perennial budget deficit, he said: "Is it even included in the 2006 budget? If they want to get [the land] through compulsory acquisition, they should have the money to pay for it."

But he said the company continued to be optimistic that the two parties would come up with an amicable settlement, as they did in the labor problem.

"For the last 15 years, we have always resolved problems through dialogues … Reaching an amicable settlement is more important than taking legal action," he said.

Mendoza said a legal battle over Hacienda Luisita was "not yet 100-percent sure" because the company was still exploring other options.

But he said the company could file a motion for reconsideration before the PARC or a civil case before the Supreme Court.

On Tuesday, the PARC en banc voted 10-1 with two abstentions to uphold the DAR recommendation to revoke the stock distribution option.

According to procedure, the DAR is to issue a notice of coverage to HLI, which will then start the long process of land acquisition and distribution.

The process will take at least a year for a landholding with 11,000 farmer-beneficiaries like Hacienda Luisita.

The Ulwu's Galang said another legal battle was in the offing with the estate management expected to appeal the PARC decision.

'Long struggle'

He said the government should ensure that HLI would not sell or lease any portion of the sugar estate pending the resolution of the appeal.

Galang said the farmers' "initial victory" in Hacienda Luisita was the result of "a long struggle."

He also dismissed speculation that the PARC decision was politically motivated, or was in retaliation for former President Aquino's call for President Macapagal-Arroyo to resign.

"Politics had little to do with the decision because this initial victory was due to the collective efforts and sacrifices of the hacienda workers," he said, adding that the lives lost during the 13-month strike were not in vain.

Galang said the Ulwu would continue to monitor developments until the land is actually distributed to the farmer-beneficiaries.

Palace anticipates Cojuangcos' appeal

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo did not take part in the decision to revoke the stock distribution option of Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac because its owners may appeal the decision before her office.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita yesterday said that in the event the Cojuangcos decided to appeal the decision, the Office of the President would be able "to conduct a review in an intelligent manner without having been preempted by its participation in the deliberations" of the 25-member Presidential Agrarian Reform Council.

Ms Arroyo chairs the PARC en banc, but it was Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman who presided over the meeting on Tuesday to determine the fate of Hacienda Luisita.

Ermita added, however, that the Cojuangcos could also appeal the PARC decision before the Supreme Court.

"Nothing can prevent interested parties from going to the Supreme Court, which is the legal route," he said.

Palace confirms energy super body now in place

From page A1

In a media briefing, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita yesterday confirmed that Abaya would head the Strategic Oil, Gas, Energy Resources and Power Infrastructure Office, which was created by President Macapagal-Arroyo through Executive Order No. 474.

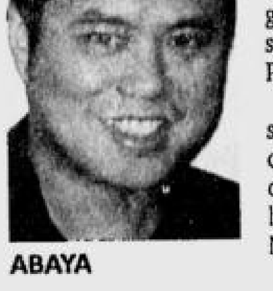
The order, which was reportedly drafted by Abaya himself, will assume practically all functions of Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, except for the minor role of monitoring oil prices.

Ermita assuaged fears that Abaya—who was relieved from his previous post of Environmental Management Bureau director for allowing the excessive importation of ozone-depleting substances into the country—would usurp the powers of Lotilla, saying Malacañang would put parameters to prevent this.

"Peter Abaya as undersecretary will continue to fall under the supervision of the energy secretary," said Ermita.

The prospect of being left powerless at the DOE has prompted Lotilla to reiterate his pending resignation letter to the President. But Ermita said Lotilla probably "misinterpreted" the functions of the oil and energy super body.

"He's a responsible Cabinet member not to take drastic action. I will personally clarify the matter with Secretary Lotilla," Ermita said.



ABAYA

The power play at the DOE has turned off foreign investors whom the government is courting to invest in the sale of power generation and transmission assets of the National Power Corp.

In a statement, Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul T. Concepcion questioned the secrecy and haste in signing EO 474 on Nov. 30.

Concepcion said DOE officials, including Lotilla, were unaware of the signing of the order and that they "expressed concern that this will send the wrong signals to foreign and local investors on whether the government wants to privatize the NPC assets and channel its resources to education and social services."

Concepcion said he had met with leaders of the foreign chambers of commerce in the country which "expressed the need for a predictable investment environment that encourages local and foreign investors."

Among the issues cited by the foreign investors were the unpredictable political situation in the country, the judicial intrusion on contracts approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission, and the lack of a fair and transparent process in the bidding of power and infrastructure projects.

Ms Arroyo's economic adviser and Albay Rep. Joey Salceda said the EO would give Abaya "vast powers without accountability over a strategic industry."

Correction

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a front-page story—"SC gives gov't go-signal to take over Naia 3"—misstated that the contract between Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) and the government had been signed by former President Joseph Estrada. The deal was signed during Fidel Ramos' term, but the contract was amended by Estrada in November 1998. The amended contract was also supplemented during Estrada's tenure in August 1999 and September 2000.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Saddam trial to resume with more horror tales

BAGHDAD—THE TRIAL OF DEPOSED IRAQI dictator Saddam Hussein is to resume on Wednesday with further testimony from witnesses detailing harrowing abuse suffered at the hands of the former regime.

Only hours before the hearing began again, one of Saddam's defense lawyers said he had been threatened with death on his arrival at Baghdad airport, and demanded greater security for the defense team.

The trial over the massacre of 148 Shiite villagers from Dujail more than 20 years ago was adjourned on Dec. 7 to allow for a landmark general election last Thursday.

Although Saddam failed to appear at the previous hearing after telling the judge to "go to hell" he was expected to turn up on Wednesday.

People familiar with what went on in a closed session reported that Saddam apologized to the judge for his behavior, asked to be excused from the next session to save face and promised to attend the next one.

Liable to be hanged if found guilty, the 68-year-old former tyrant who once embodied Arab defiance of the West is the first Middle East head of state to be tried by his own people.

Witnesses, many hidden behind screens with disguised voices, have relayed chilling tales of torture while Saddam and seven co-defendants loudly disputed their testimony and condemned the court.

Heavily criticized by the Shiites and Kurds, who were long oppressed by Saddam's Sunni-dominated regime, hearings for a remaining five "complainant" witnesses are not expected to extend past Thursday.

The trial is then likely to be adjourned again until mid-January because of Christmas, the announcement of Iraq's election results, New Year and finally the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in the second week of January.

At this point, the final phase of the judge-led "truth seeking" phase of the trial will take place with further eyewitness and documentary evidence. *AFP*

Rumsfeld doubts Osama control of al-Qaida

ISLAMABAD—US DEFENSE SECretary Donald Rumsfeld on Wednesday said he doubted that al-Qaida founder Osama bin Laden was now capable of supervising the global operations of the militant organization.

"I have trouble believing that he is able to operate sufficiently to be in a position of major command over a worldwide al-Qaida operation but I could be wrong. We just don't know," Rumsfeld told reporters aboard his plane en route to Pakistan.

"I suspect that in any event if he is alive and functioning, that he is probably spending a major fraction of his time in trying to avoid being caught," he said.

"I think it is interesting that we have not heard from him for a year, close to a year. I don't know what it means."

Pakistan has been a key ally in the US-led "war on terror" and during his visit, Rumsfeld was to tour areas of the country that were hit by the October earthquake, which killed more than 73,000 people here.

The United States has been a major contributor to the relief effort, and Rumsfeld stressed Washington's cooperation with "moderate" Islamic nations.

"I think it is important that the world recognizes the relationships the United States has had in the past with moderate Muslim states and what we do," he said.

Rumsfeld said the world should "see that the activities of the United States are to support those ... who are opposed to the people who cut off heads ... and engage in violent extremist activities."

He called Pakistan "a moderate Muslim regime in the world that is demonstrating ... partnership." *AFP*

Elton John to wed long time partner in England

POP STAR Elton John and partner David Furnish REUTERS

WINDSOR, ENGLAND—POP STAR Elton John was tying the knot with longtime partner David Furnish Wednesday, in a civil union ceremony seen as a watershed in the struggle for gay rights—and as the party of the season by celebrity-spotters.

Some fans turned up before sunrise in the cobbled streets around Windsor's town hall, the Guildhall, where Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles wed in April.

"It's a special day for Elton. I want to be a part of it really, it's good fun and it's interesting to see what's going on," said Andrea Lever, who traveled 200 miles, or 320 kilometers, from Torquay in southwest England for the event.

Richard Kendall of Windsor said his wife thought he was mad to be out so early.

"I think it's a great day for Britain, it is equality at long last. Everyone deserves to be with the person that they choose—gay, straight, whatever—everyone should be equal, it's an historic day," he said.

Police erected security barriers outside the sturdy building of brick and Portland stone partly designed by Christopher Wren, but expected no trouble.

"It's not a major police operation—it's not a royal wedding," Windsor police spokesperson Sue Mahoney said. "The general atmosphere seems to be jolly, very good humored."

Windsor is a centuries-old seat of British royalty west of London. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Hopes dim Iran to give up nukes

VIENNA—Iran and the European Union were to meet again Wednesday, with diplomats warning that hopes were slim for getting Tehran to abandon making the nuclear fuel the West says could be used to manufacture atomic bombs. The talks in Vienna between foreign ministry officials from Britain, France and Germany and Iranian National Security Council official Javad Vaidi are the first contact between the two sides since talks broke off in August, when Iran resumed uranium conversion. Tehran appears in no mood to stop this process, with the country's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, saying Monday that the discussions would have to focus on making sure the products of enrichment were not "diverted" for military purposes. "The world has understood that the national will of Iran to enrich is serious," he said. *AFP*

Thousands try to stop toxic spill

KHABAROVSK, Russia—Thousands of Chinese laborers supported by Russian military helicopters and hundreds of trucks raced against time to finish a dam to protect the Russian city of Khabarovsk from a toxic spill expected to hit Wednesday, officials said. Officials said Tuesday the sandbag dam, one of two built hastily to prevent the possible flow of benzene-contaminated water from the Amur river into Khabarovsk, a city of 600,000 in Russia's Far East region, would be completed before the poison reached the city. *AFP*

Google, AOL tie up for $1B

NEW YORK—Online search titan Google is investing $1 billion to take a five-percent stake in Time Warner's America Online unit as part of a major strategic alliance, the companies announced Tuesday. They said the agreement, which shuts out software giant Microsoft from a rumored AOL tie-up, will create a global online advertising partnership and make more of AOL's content available to Google users. The deal confirms a years-old relationship between AOL and Google, said analyst Rob Helm of the independent research firm Directions on Microsoft. *AFP*

NY workers fined $1M a day

NEW YORK—A judge levied a million dollars-a-day fine on striking transit workers Tuesday as New York commuters began struggling home in frigid weather in the city's first transit strike in a quarter-century. Based on a law prohibiting strikes on key public services, the New York State Supreme Court judge called the Transport Workers Union in contempt of court for the work stoppage, and fined the union $1 million for each day they remain off the job, said a spokesperson for the city's Law Department. *AFP*

Low US supply hikes oil costs

LONDON—World oil prices climbed on Wednesday, with markets expecting official data later in the day to show a drop in US crude inventories. New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in February, added 12 cents to $58.21 per barrel in electronic trading. The January contract expired on Monday, with a closing price of $57.98 per barrel. In London, the price of Brent North Sea crude for February delivery won 13 cents to $56.30 per barrel. Analysts in London were predicting US crude stocks to have fallen by 1.3 million barrels during the week to Dec. 16. Distillates, which include heating oil and diesel, were forecast to have dipped by 800,000 barrels. However experts were predicting a rise in gasoline (petrol) inventories of about 1.0 million barrels. *AFP*

US solons demand probe of bugging

WASHINGTON—DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLIcan calls mounted on Tuesday for US congressional hearings into President George W. Bush's assertion that he can order warrantless spying on Americans with suspected terrorist ties.

Vice President Dick Cheney predicted a backlash against critics of the administration's antiterrorism policies. He also dismissed charges that Bush overstepped his constitutional bounds when he implemented the recently disclosed eavesdropping shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Republican Senators Chuck Hagel of Nebraska and Olympia Snowe of Maine joined Democratic Senators Carl Levin of Michigan, Dianne Feinstein of California and Ron Wyden of Oregon in calling for a joint investigation by the Senate Intelligence and Judiciary Committees into whether the government eavesdropped "without appropriate legal authority."

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, a Nevada Democrat, said he would prefer separate hearings by the judiciary committee, which has already promised one, and intelligence committee.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, a Tennessee Republican, was noncommittal, saying he first wanted to further explore the matter.

"I have been in discussion with the various chairmen and will continue that discussion," Frist said. "And then decisions will be made as to whether or not (there will be) hearings, and where such hearings would be carried out." *Reuters*

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Lilia Alcala, Mother

Doing what you love most and at the same time enjoying it is a very essential thing one cannot compare. I started as an executive secretary of this proud Filipino family business. It just groomed me to become the branch manager. And I see more years of serving our customers with quality goods and services.

Ramon Gavalez, Store Manager

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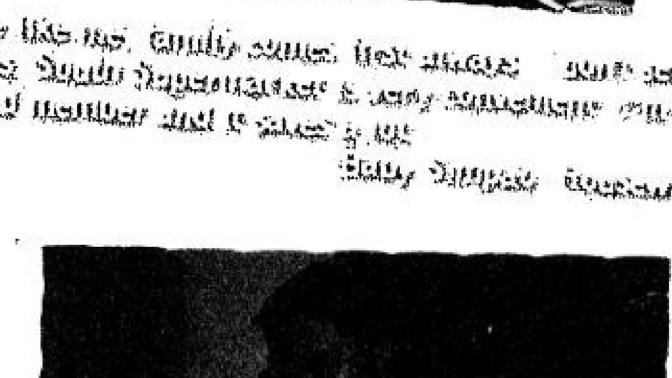
King Alacala, Son

I am a Super Mom. I work hard for my kids and at the same time attend to their needs. But my lifestyle is really fast paced. I need an organized supermarket with a complete product line to save me time. South Supermarket is simply the best.

Eleanor [illegible], Working Mother

I love shoping at South Supermarket. Surprisingly they are packed with lots of items, from groceries to make-up and kikay stuff they've almost got everything. And it perfectly fits a student's limited budget.

Anna Brillantes, Student



For a housewife like me, family comes first always. I don't settle for anything less. South Supermarket is very convenient. I'm a South Greencard member and it saves a lot.

Baby [illegible], Housewife

I love clothes and I am a self-confessed fashionista. The items here are trendy and chic. Kaya naman at home ako dito. Mura na, cool pa!

Kirsty Muñoz, Student

As a doctor, I am very picky on what I put in my body. They have a wide variety of produce and a good selection of fresh meat and fish. At home talaga ako dito.

Jonathan [illegible], Medical Doctor

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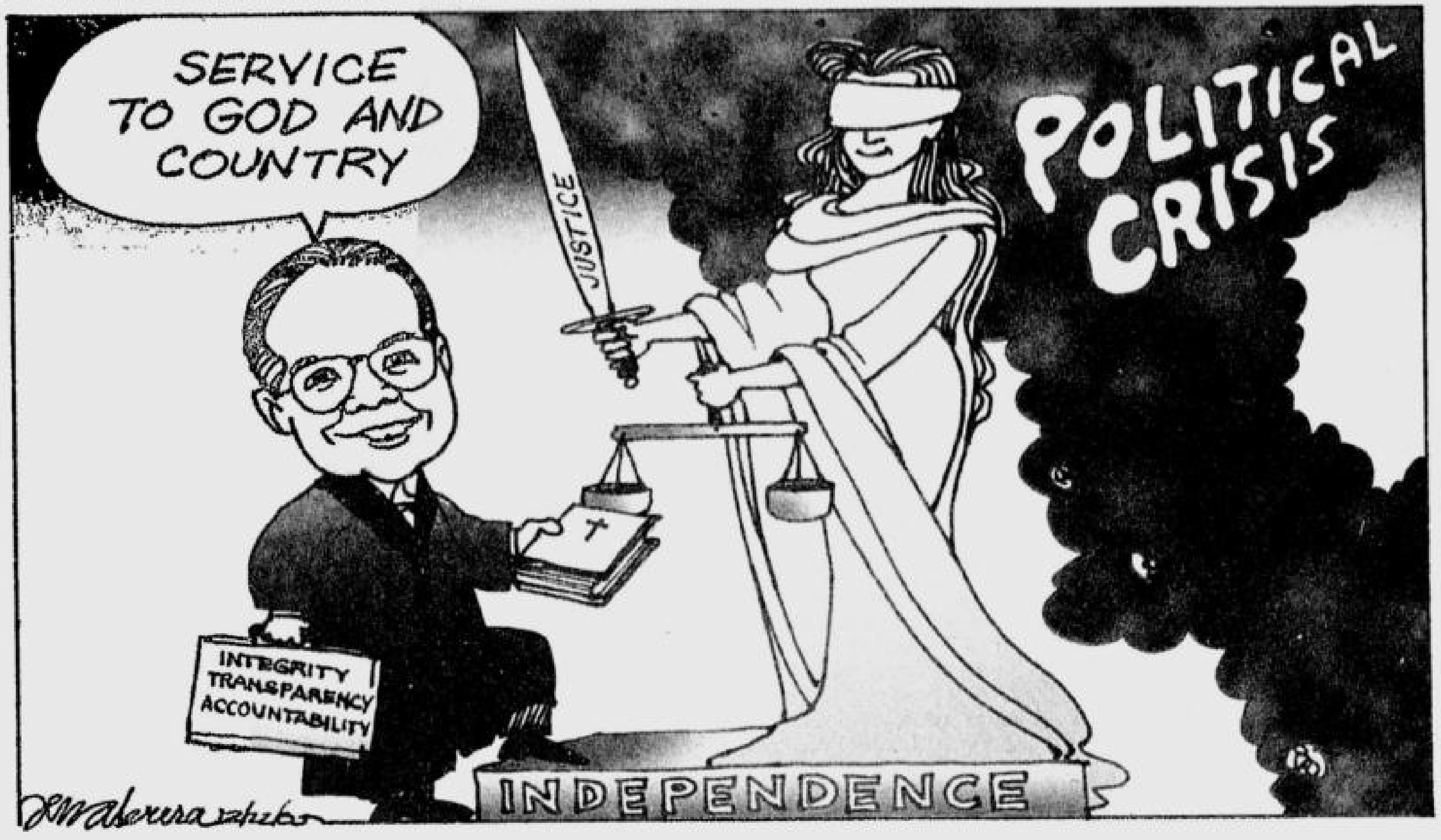
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Joy and passion

EDITORIAL

FORGET THE COSTLY GIFTS AND SHOPPING STRESS. Christmas is primarily about peace, joy and hope. Christmas is spiritual, not commercial.

Even Catholic Philippines needs to be reminded that the true meaning of Christmas goes beyond tinsel and materialism; it's the joy that faith in God and humanity bring. So goes the reminder of Pope Benedict XVI: "Joy is the true gift of Christmas—not expensive gifts that cost time and money, but joy." It's a reminder that we should all take to heart.

It is propitious that the Supreme Pontiff, also the bishop of Rome, should make the remark during a pastoral visit to a working-class parish in Rome. The working class may be vulnerable to hurly-burly politics and the ups and downs of economics, but it is also resilient and practical enough to transcend the pressures. Such a people are the real constituency of a Church that basically looks at suffering as part and parcel of earthly life, though bearable and ultimately salvific because of the Christian vision of eternity. The working class is a hopeful people.

But the Pope, of course, addresses himself to general humanity, and his message has that catholicity of message that applies to everyone. He knows that the narcissism and commoditization that characterize the Christmas season are but indications that many Christians go through the motions of Christmas not so much because they believe in Christ, but more because they want to cash in on the holidays. He knows that Christmas has been secularized, commercialized and de-Christianized. Christmas has been denatured of its import and significance.

"In today's world, God is absent," Benedict says. "People need anesthesia to live. They live in a dark world." The anesthesia, perhaps, comes in ruthless greed and shameless gratification. Or in saccharine pieties and superficial rituals bereft of any lasting and substantial meaning.

But should not the emptiness of the times be satisfied, indeed, by sybaritic hedonism and equally sybaritic escapism? How else could one bear with the sufferings and vagaries of existence if not through an epicureanism that thrives on immediate gratification and ready recourse for anodyne?

In fact, Benedict does not gloss over the crises and pressures, personal or public, which bear upon people. This is in keeping with the Catholic teaching on joy. To St. Thomas Aquinas, joy and sadness are "principal passions," and this is "because in them all the other passions have their completion and end." The great Dominican thinker cites Christ's passion as both an example of joy and sadness: for in the passion, "there is something that causes sorrow, namely, the human defect, the removal of which made it necessary for Christ to suffer; and there is something that causes joy, namely, God's loving-kindness to us in giving us such a deliverance." Aquinas' is a very precise and lucid expression of Christian realism: that while suffering is inevitable in life, it is also redeemable, that is, it can be transformed to joy because of the loving sacrifice of Christ.

Benedict therefore offers the Christian message not as a false antidote but as a message of hope amid despair, belief amid frustration, and charity amid so much cruelty. When he insists that Christians should radiate joy this Christmas season, he does not mean they should do so like matrons showing off their cosmetically reengineered, prettified jaws and chins amid so much ugliness in the face of poverty and social iniquity. He wants Christians to share their joy through charity. This is what he means by "communicating joy."

"Joy should be communicated," Pope Benedict said. "We can communicate joy in a simple way. With a smile, an act of kindness, a little help, forgiveness, you can bring joy, and that joy will come back to you." Joy, in this context, is an act, nay, a mandate, for charity. It is an imperative in the act of sharing and of caring for one another.

Inevitably, Christmas should be a time for Christians to reaffirm Christian hope. It cannot be otherwise. The world may offer so much pain, but Christian joy transcends all this not by escaping from them through morphine and false cures, but by meeting them head-on, with the belief that God's grace is present to renew the earth—but through the agency of human skill and optimism. Let St. Augustine, the Pope's favorite theologian, have the final word:

"Let not, then, our joy be like that of the world, whereof it is said, 'But the world shall rejoice'; and yet let not our sorrow in travailing in birth with such a desire be unmingled with joy; but, as the apostle says, be 'rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation.'"

Christmas crib theology

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

SCANNING MY JUMBLED FILES, I CAME across a 1995 address on Christmas, delivered by the theologian Catalino Arevalo, S.J. It still resonated. Excerpts follow:

"Some years back, the Belgian theologian Edward Schillebeeckx was asked in a magazine interview: Where did you learn your deepest Christology? At that time, Schillebeeckx had just finished his monumental three-volume work on Jesus. The interviewer expected him to name the renowned theological centers where he studied, researched and taught: Leuven, Le Saulchoir (Paris) or Nijmegen.

"Schillebeeckx's answer was unexpected. At home, he said, in my childhood, in the Christmas crib in our living room. 'My father spent time telling us about the stable of Bethlehem, and Luke's story, and how the babe in the manger was Mary's son and God's very own son, and how he became a babe because he loved each one of us, because God wanted to give his life for the world, to share his joy with us.'

"After 20 years of absence from the subject, I was asked to teach Christology again at the Loyola School of Theology. I had to read books, written after 1974, on the mystery of Christ, not just to fill 10-minute homilies, but many hours of class. (This required going) back to the theme which exercised medieval scholastic theologians, and the Church Fathers before them: *de motivo incarnationis*.

"What was behind the Mystery of the Incarnation? Why did God become man? Why was he born? Why, Nazareth, why the teaching-preaching-healing ministry? Why the Cross and resurrection?

"For a whole school of the Fathers, our redemption was already in the incarnation—a mighty torrent of light flowing from the mystery of God-made-man, whose first shining forth is Bethlehem, whose first Epiphany was the Child in the manger, the Child we call Jesus because he would save his people from sin, the boy called Emmanuel which means God is with us.

"'Don't we wonder,' the German theologian Karl Rahner asks, 'that for ages on end, we begged God to come, to save us our terror, our wars and genocides, all the hells we continually create for ourselves. For centuries, we've asked him to come and change all this.'

"And he came, so we believe. And he didn't change all this. And yet, year after year, we fill our Advents with the same longing, the same petitions, the same demands."

"Come (we say) and rescue us from all the harm and ruin that is of our making. *Halina, Hesus, Halina.* 'Come, Lord Jesus, come.' We who have faith believe that he comes, again and again, in answer to our asking.

"And yet, things haven't really changed. In fact, it seems things have gone from bad to worse with us here: where (cities have) become polluted parking lots, where greed sinks (overloaded) ferryboats, 'tradpols' grow fat from *jueteng* money, and brothers keep killing brothers in (Sulu) and other 'more nearby' places.

"And when Advent comes around, we say—is it with such naiveté?—'come,' always with longing hearts, with never-tiring prayers, even when nothing better seems to happen.

"And yet, he has come, truly. Only we keep wanting him to do what he didn't intend, and doesn't intend, to do. Not all by himself, at any rate, but only with us, together with us. *Nobiscum*. For what he has come to be is Emmanuel. He wants to be with us, no matter what, no matter where. To be with us is to enter 'as immanently as possible' into our own life-stories.

"(The child in the crib) is our Emmanuel: that is what it means. God who is not only beside us always, but God within us always, as love—unconditional, unwavering, unwearying love, that will never abandon us.

"Is this still too abstract? What shall we say?

"It means, in faith, that God has really entered the world in Jesus. It means, in faith, that he has given us his word of mercy and compassion, nearness and sharing, his word of love. He has spoken it into the world, into all human history, into all our lives.

"He has given it in such wise that he cannot ever take it back. It means that every thought in our brains and every beat of our hearts is his also. He has taken them over in his own life—keeping them, if you will, in his brain, in his sinews, in his heart.

"Somehow, he inhabits now every moment of our days, the roar of our laughter and the whimper of our pain, the leaping of the heart in love, the groan of fear and the tightening in the pit of our guts. It is only our sin he cannot take over, because sin moves in the regions of death and he, to his core, is life.

"Even our own weaknesses and temptation, he makes his own: tears at a friend Lazarus' dying, sweat of terror—thick as blood—there in the garden, under the trees. Nothing of our human experience but he has made it his own.

"'Emmanuel' means there is nothing more in human life, joy, pain and even dying, but God is in it also. 'There are no more unvisited places in our lives,' John Shea likes to say.

"Christmas is about God coming down to be one of us, and one with us, going as deep into our lives as he can, and as deeply as we will let him. As the old Latin hymns used to say it: *Puer natus est nobis; filius datus est nobis.* 'Unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given.'

"To all our darkness and sin, our perplexity and despair, to all our questioning and fears, our longings and hopes, there is a God who is near us—who loves us beyond measure and imagination—a God who gives one answer today, one only: 'Listen, for the word is spoken look…behold my son is born.'"

* * *

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Counting blessings

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THESE DAYS, WHEN SOMEBODY GREETS ME "Merry Christmas," I'm almost tempted to reply, "How?" As a friend reminds me, Christmas represents the coming of Truth and Light into the world, the two things least visible in the country today. The way things are, I am reminded only of the lines in "O Holy Night": "Long lay the world, in sin and error pining/ Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth." Only the first part of it seems true to us.

But I'll forget all that for the nonce, I have more than enough reason to be thankful this year. If I counted my blessings instead of sheep, I guess I can fall asleep reasonably fast, the bounties are there in much plenitude. Of course, if I counted sheep instead of blessings, the sheep including the ones who walk on two legs, I'll fall asleep even faster. But that's another story, one best left for next year, which comes a couple of weeks from now.

Not the least of my blessings this year is health, such as it can be called that. No life-threatening afflictions compared to last year. Last year, I lost my gall bladder in rather dire circumstances, for which my friends thank God eternally and for which my enemies remonstrate with heaven. Two pigment stones (the rarer black variety, as opposed to the more common green ones, which are the cholesterol stones) decided to wedge into the opening of my bladder, swelling it up in record time. By the time I was operated on, it was near to bursting. In the nick of time, as they say. Thank God for St. Nick.

I lost my gall bladder last year, but if the friends of my favorite archbishop of Davao are to be believed, I got a lot more gall this year. I attribute my general well-being to two things. One is virgin coconut oil, whose virtues I have already extolled and continue to swear by. It is no accident that the person who discovered its effects is also named Conrado—Conrado Dayrit, father of Manolet, the former health secretary. There must be something to the name.

The second is anger. Yes, anger. Contrary to rumor—also called medical findings—anger does not always cause high blood, it often causes youth. The anger at least that has to do with iniquity, not the one associated with driving. Contrary to rumor, the thing that causes people to grow old is the lack of anger. It is the one thing that causes people to be dead long before they die.

Yet another blessing this year is the music. There's a musical renaissance of sorts taking place in our midst. I wrote about it a couple of months ago, but don't mind repeating it here. Most of my friends have kids joining or forming bands. Not unlike the 1960s, when bands (called combos then) drew us like moths to a flame. It was a woeful neighborhood where you didn't hear the wail of electric guitars as bands/combos practiced.

The nice thing about today's bands however is, one, they no longer cling to the alcohol/drug culture of yore. You're a lush or an addict, you're not cool and hip, you lack discipline and suck. Never mind sports, join bands. Don't do drugs, do songs. Two and more importantly, the kids are making their own music. In my time, the ambition of bands was to clone the covers they were playing—*plakado*, as the idiom went. A friend of mine told me recently, laughing, that his group even copied the mistakes of the original. Today's bands don't do that at all. Even when they do covers, they arrange them differently. For some reason, reggae seems a favored genre.

Jazz has been flowering and floundering in equal measure. Freedom Bar still has its jazz nights on Mondays and '70s Bistro on Tuesdays. But some places that cater to jazz have either folded up or relocated elsewhere. My undiluted admiration goes to those who have kept the faith, amid the dire times and the dire patronage. While at this, you might want to buy Affinity's album, called (what else?) "Affinity," which came out some months ago. The group boasts of some of the finest names in local music—Johnny Alegre, Tots Tolentino, Colby de la Calzada, Ehlmir Saison and Koko Bermejo. Their album is all original compositions, of course. I myself can vouch for the quality of the composition and recording: They make you proud to be Pinoy.

My detractors have grown but apparently more so my supporters. This year especially saw no less than a couple of dozen kids from various colleges interview me for their school papers. My deepest apologies to those who e-mailed me or texted me requesting the same thing but whom I could not accommodate—I have to earn my keep too, you know. But it's the kids I refuse to refuse. I do believe with absolute conviction they are the hope of the country or, at least, its saving grace. They also happen to show good taste by insisting on interviewing me.

The text messages of support gladden the heart. Particularly the variety that says, as someone articulated it: "God put you there for a purpose and gave you the gifts to achieve it." Many thanks for that, which makes column-writing, or tormenting tormentors—whichever comes first—still worthwhile.

The bookstores are still there, despite figures that show this country to be lapsing into illiteracy; Limewire and Kazaa are still there, despite big-business efforts to dismantle them and despite the viruses that now infest them; DVD titles have become more sophisticated (last I went to Quiapo they had the early movies of Ingmar Bergman). I wish I had better news about my gout but I don't, it still ravages me. Though on occasions such as this, I still defy the odds or the gods—whichever is the more daunting—and partake of the one thing I am absolutely certain was made in heaven, which is wine, and wish everyone:

Merry Christmas!

Triple 21 auspicious beginning for Panganiban

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

AS A DEVOUT CATHOLIC LAY LEADER, JUSTICE Artemio Panganiban is, perhaps, not given much to good omens. Instead, he tries to divine the will of God in events. But I'm sure he cannot but be struck by the auspicious timing of his appointment as chief justice by President Macapagal-Arroyo. His swearing-in at Malacañang yesterday, on the 21st of December, makes him the 21st Chief Justice since the founding of the Supreme Court in 1901, and the first in the 21st century. A triple 21.

What tilted it in his favor? The Palace announcement came as he tendered a thanksgiving dinner for those who had helped make the recent International Judicial Conference here a big success. At that confab, the reform program begun by retired Chief Justice Hilario Davide was recognized and touted as the role model for all developing countries. Panganiban had worked actively with Davide on this program. In fact, before his appointment as Chief Justice, he chaired seven committees involved in the reforms.

* * *

It can be argued that the strongest factor was not Panganiban's prodigious output—the 10,000 full-length decisions, 10 books and several thousands of minute resolutions—in his 10 years at the high court. Neither was it just the purported *utang na loob* GMA owed him. Recall that Justice Reynato Puno penned the decision upholding the legality of the Court's earlier decision which ruled that President Estrada abandoned his post in January 2001. I dare say it's GMA's desire to see the reform program of Davide completed within one year (Panganiban retires in December 2006 at the compulsory age of 70) that made it for the new Chief Justice. Among the reforms being pursued is the completion of the Court's full computerization, begun in Davide's term as Panganiban's special project. Thus, given his experience, the new Chief Justice is expected to hit the ground running on reforms.

It's unfortunate that Justice Puno's sympathizers did not take the appointment of his colleague with sporting spirit. The prerogative to choose anyone from the Judicial Bar Council's nominees belongs solely to the President, and seniority which is Puno's strongest point, cannot be the sole criterion. Recall that US President Bush, in fact, chose the current US Supreme Court chief not from that court but from the US Appellate Court. And no protest was heard.

* * *

Our INQUIRER colleague Johnny Mercado sent this Christmas editorial that was first published by the Wall Street Journal in 1948, and which it has republished every year since:

"When Saul of Tarsus set out on his journey to Damascus, the whole of the known world lay in bondage. There was one state, and it was Rome. There was one master for it all, and he was Tiberius Caesar.

"Everywhere there was civil order for the arm of the Roman law was long. Everywhere there was stability, in government and in society, for the centurions saw that it was so.

"But everywhere there was something else, too. There was oppression—for those who were not the friends of Tiberius Caesar. There was the tax gatherer to take the grain from the fields and the flax from the spindle to feed the legions or to fill the hungry treasury from which divine Caesar gave largess to the people. There was the impressor to find recruits for the circuses. There were executioners—to quiet those whom the Emperor prescribed.

"What was man for but to serve Caesar?

"There was the persecution of men who dared think differently, who heard strange voices or read strange manuscripts. There was enslavement of men whose tribes came not from Rome, disdain for those who did not have the familiar visage. And most of all, there was everywhere a contempt for human life. What, to the strong, was one man more or less in a crowded world?

"Then, all of a sudden, there was a light in the world, and a man from Galilee saying: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

"And the voice from Galilee, which would defy Caesar, offered a new Kingdom in which each man could walk upright and bow to none but his God. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. And he sent this gospel of the Kingdom of Man into the uttermost ends of the earth.

"So the light came into the world and the men who lived in darkness were afraid, and they tried to lower a curtain so that man would still believe salvation lay with leaders.

"But it came to pass for a while in diverse places that the truth did set man free, although the men of darkness were offended and they tried to put out the light. The voice said, Haste ye. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness knoweth not wither he goeth.

"Along the road to Damascus the light shone brightly. But afterwards Paul of Tarsus, too, was so afraid. He feared that other Caesars, other prophets, might one day persuade men that man was nothing save a servant unto them, that men might yield up their birthright from God for pottage and walk no more in freedom.

"Then might it come to pass that darkness would settle again over the lands and there would be a burning of books and men would think only of what they should eat and what they should wear, and would give heed only to new Caesars and to false prophets. Then might it come to pass that men would not look upwards to see even a winter's star in the East, and once more, there would be no light at all in the darkness.

"And so Paul, the apostle of the Son of Man, spoke to his brethren, the Galatians, the words he would have us remember afterwards in each of the years of his Lord:

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

The Christmas story in the Koran

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IS NOT ONLY TOLD IN the Bible of the Christians. It is also in the Koran of the Muslims. I went over the Koran, which is not familiar terrain for me. I also browsed through an Islamic website where I found interesting stuff.

In the Koran, one will find an account of Mary's own birth, the Annunciation and later, the Nativity and Jesus' public life. Mary is mentioned in the Koran 34 times. But before Jesus' birth is the story about the miraculous conception and birth of John the Baptist, the precursor of the Messiah that was to come.

The Koran says Mary was the daughter of the wife of Imran. When Imran's wife was pregnant, she made a vow: she would offer her child to be raised and serve at the Temple. She thought she would give birth to a son, but when she delivered, the child turned out be a girl. The mother was disappointed.

She named the child "Mary," which meant servant. Mary's father Imran had died before she was born, so her mother brought her to the temple to be reared by the priests. Zakariyya (John the Baptist's father?) was one of them. Unable to decide who would have the privilege of having custody of Mary, the priests drew lots. Zakariyya's name was drawn and he became Mary's guardian.

When Mary reached the age of puberty, Zakariyya saw to it that she was protected from the eyes of men. Mary worshipped Allah in a special partition where nobody could enter, except Zakariyya. Whenever Zakariyya came in he always found her with food.

"O Mary! Whence comes this to you?" Zakariyya would ask. Mary would answer: "It is from Allah, and surely Allah gives sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure."

From the Koran here is the word-for-word account on the Annunciation:

This is one of the announcements of things Unseen by thee: To thee, O Muhammad! Do we reveal it; for thou wast not with them when they cast lots with reeds which of them should rear Mary; nor wast thou with them when they disputed about it.

Remember when the angel said, "O Mary! Verily God announceth to thee the word from Him: His name shall be, Messiah Jesus the son of Mary, illustrious in this world, and in the next, and one of those who have near access to God;

"And he shall speak to men alike when in the cradle and when grown up; And he shall be one of the just."

She said, "How, O my Lord! Shall I have a son, when man hath not touched me?" He said, "Thus: God will create what He will; When He decreeth a thing, He only saith, 'Be,' and it is.'

"And he will teach him the Book, and the Wisdom, and the Law, and the Evangel; and he shall be an apostle to the children of Israel. 'Now I have come,' he will say, 'to you with a sign from your Lord: Out of clay will I make for you, as it were, the figure of a bird: and I will breathe unto it, and it shall become by God's leave, a bird. And I will heal the blind, and the leper; and by God's leave will I quicken the dead, and will tell you what ye eat, and what ye store up in your houses! Truly in this will be a sign for you, if ye are believers...."

But this is getting ahead of the story. In a later chapter, the Annunciation scene is repeated. Mary gives birth, not in a stable, but beside the trunk of a date palm. This is a rather colorful birth scene, what with dates falling on her.

And make mention of the Book of Mary, when she went apart from her family, eastward,

And took a veil to shroud herself from them: and We sent Our spirit to her, he took before her the form of a perfect man.

She said: "I fly for refuge from thee to the God of Mercy! If thou fearest Him, begone from me."

He said, "I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a holy son."

She said, "How shall have I a son, when man hath never touched me? I am not unchaste."

He said: "So shall it be. The Lord hath said: 'Easy is this with me;' and 'We will make him a sign to mankind, and a mercy from Us. For it is a thing decreed.'

And she conceived him, and retired with him to a far-off place.

And the throes came upon her by the trunk of a palm. She said, "Oh, would that I had died ere this, and been a thing forgotten, forgotten quite!"

And one cried to her from below her: "Grieve not thou, thy Lord hath provided a streamlet at thy feet:—

And shake the trunk of the palm tree towards thee: it will drop fresh ripe dates upon thee.

Eat then and drink, and be of cheerful eye: and shouldst thou see a man,

Say,—"Verily, I have vowed abstinence to the God of mercy. To no one I will speak this day."

Then came she with the babe to her people bearing him. They said, "O Mary! Now hast thou done a strange thing!

O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of wickedness, nor unchaste thy mother."

And she made a sign to them pointing towards the babe. They said, "How shall we speak with him who is in the cradle, an infant?"

It said, "Verily, I am the servant of God; He hath given me the Book, and He hath made me a prophet;

He hath made me blessed wherever I may be, and hath enjoined me prayer and almsgiving so long as I shall live.

And to be duteous to her that bare me: and he hath not made me proud, depraved.

And the peace of God was on me the day I was born, and will be the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised to life."

This is Jesus, the son of Mary; this is a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt.

It beseemeth not God to beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He decreeth a thing, He only saith to it, "Be," and it is.

Peace be to all the warring Christians and Muslims. Maligayang Pasko sa inyong lahat!

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Peace, and quiet

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

A SQUALID, SUFFERING METROPOLIS. PROhibitively expensive food. Water, a scarce commodity; sanitation, non-existent. Throughout the the city, thousands huddle in makeshift shanties. Many are ill-clothed; lucky if they can wear war surplus uniforms, or receive donations from foreign Red Cross agencies.

Congress has voted itself back wages. Officials seem to care only about making the most out of new opportunities for graft and profiteering. Crime is rampant, and besides the proliferation of loose weapons, many are fearful of soldiers and policemen. Security guards are in demand.

Many families are stricken by grief, mourning the loss of loved ones, the majority of whom lie in unmarked, mass graves.

And yet it is Christmas; not perhaps a Christmas of unbridled joy and lavish celebration, like the Christmases so vividly alive in the memories of those who now face an unsettling future, but Christmas just the same.

A composer, one of those who has lived through the most harrowing days of the metropolis, surveys the city he calls home and is struck by the contrast between the seeming hopelessness of it all and the hearts of his fellow citizens. The cacophony of politics, the screaming headlines about corruption, killings and the poverty of a people seem to vanish in the cold Christmas air. People seem to be content to be together with their loved ones, grateful for the peace limited to their homes. The night is quiet, and for once, peaceful.

He takes up his pen...

Ang gabi payapa
lahat ay tahimik
pati mga tala
sa bughaw na langit

Kay hinhin ng hangin
waring umiibig
sa kapayapaan
ng buong daigdig

Payapang panahon
ay diwa ng buhay
biyaya ng Diyos
sa sangkatauhan

Ang gabi payapa
lahat ay tahimik...

This was Manila, 1945: just a few months after that holocaust—now commonly referred to as The Liberation—claimed the lives of over a hundred thousand Filipino civilians. The composer was Felipe de Leon. The song he wrote is the song we know as "Payapang Daigdig," originally a hymn to peace, and now one of the most haunting Christmas songs you hear.

This was 60 years ago; but how familiar it all sounds!

In our metropolis, in the entire country, millions live in conditions as pitiful as those war victims, in homes also made of debris; they can only gape at those who have seized the opportunities of the day, and are making fortunes, while the majority of citizens struggle to eke out a living.

We do not even have the small satisfaction of having a government recently arrived from exile, bravely attempting to get a country going again. Instead we seem to be in a nation drowning in its problems, its miseries.

We do not have the consolation of knowing that our loved ones have died for something called freedom, even though they may also be buried in ditches and in fields. Our loved ones have died because of greed. The greed of their fellow citizens: kidnappers, rapists, bank robbers, assassins; men in uniform, or contracted by those in uniform, or, at the very least, men unafraid of those in uniform because they know the latter are just as corrupt and evil as themselves. We live—but certainly not in a regime that can claim to be a living, breathing, authentic democracy.

We do not have any feelings of hope, or gratitude just for being alive, unlike those alive in Manila in 1945. Everywhere trepidation lurks in the hearts of people. Those who cannot recall the Christmas of 60 years ago, may be able to recall another Christmas, almost a quarter-century ago. The first Christmas of martial law. A question haunts us: do we face the revival of the nightmares of a generation ago, or a new darkness more insidious and sinister because of the lessons it has learned from the past?

Ah, but we are still Filipinos, and, as such, in our sentimental hearts burns a yearning for peace. The peace you can find reflected in the eyes of your family, your children, your friends. It is a yearning which we must guard and cherish, for it is the only thing that will keep us from surrendering to those who would guarantee us quietness and call it peace.

For quietness—the quietness of the tomb, of the gagged mouth and the liquidated prisoner—is not peace; neither does it mean that suffering and fear will stop, that we will all be able to dwell in peace. It will only mean that no one will hear our cries of anguish—our sobs of terror and fear, or worse, of total disillusionment and spiritual exhaustion—when we finally realize that we have sold our souls to would-be saviors whom, we know, this early on, care nothing for real peace.

These are somber thoughts on a Christmas which may be one of the most somber in recent memory. But we can take heart from those who have lived through far worse Christmases. They made it, and many of them are still among us, to encourage us and to tell us that the love for peace—and the compassion that still moves us to care about those who suffer (which makes us cry out against abuses carried out in the name of authority)—the love and subdued feeling of joy in being with loved ones that now fill all our hearts, are the things that will carry us through.

We, all of us, must cling to what we believe in—and in what generations have suffered for—if goodness and the simple things that make our society worthwhile are to endure. And, one day, triumph.

Silent night

YOUNG BLOOD

Rolly Jude M. Ortega

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I DON'T CARE IF HISTORIANS CONTINUE TO ARGUE about when Jesus Christ was exactly born. What I want to believe is that this is the season for celebration and merrymaking. In fact, gifts have started coming in. With my board mates and some friends, I'll be going to a resort for an overnight party. Best of all, I have started to enjoy our two-week vacation.

But despite the colorful surroundings and the festive mood of people around me, I'm not really excited about Christmas. I can't feel the spirit of Christmas, especially when I think of how Janjan will be spending Christmas Eve.

The whole of Koronadal is Janjan's territory, but he has no power over it. His playground is green and spacious, but he can't even choose his playmates. His dining area never runs out of food, but all he can have are leftovers.

Janjan lives in a home that has no walls and has the sky for a roof. He is a street Arab. He roams Rizal Park by day and begs for food at barbecue stalls at night.

I first saw the kid at the back of city hall several months ago, when the staff of our student publication decided to take supper in one of the barbecue tents there. While we were eating, a boy in tattered clothes quietly approached our table and showed us his empty hand. He looked no more than 6 years old. His hair was stringy and he kept scratching his head.

After we gave the homeless boy some coins, we could have completely forgotten him. But the cook who waved a skewer at him ordered, "Janjan, *halin da* (go away)." The kid gave the man a piercing look and scurried away. One of my friends then muttered something like, "So, he's got a name." And we had a good laugh.

I think my friends and I got fascinated with the boy because he's the only beggar we have ever known. I mean, it was our first time to meet a street kid who wasn't addressed as "Bata" or "Hoy." After that night, we would look for Janjan every time we eat in that street, which we have decided to call "Baywalk." We would then observe whatever Janjan is doing. If we couldn't spot him anywhere near the area, we would worry a little bit and wonder where he could be.

I have noticed that many people who go there know Janjan. I sometimes see drunken customers call him by name and give him some food. But they treat the poor boy no better than a stray dog.

Janjan must have also gained his humble popularity in the streets because of his dancing skills. Sometimes he dances upon hearing music from a radio or the videoke bars nearby. And he moves as if he has no bones!

If Janjan were living a normal life, I suppose he would ask for a music CD if he were to pick a Christmas gift for himself. He obviously loves music. During the city's Octobeerfest, I saw him sitting on the ground near the stage all night, his eyes fixed on the band as it performed.

I wonder if Christmas means anything to Janjan. I wonder if he knows why people go caroling or that Santa Claus and glittering lights are meant to make Christmas fun for children. I doubt if he has any inkling about whose birthday we are celebrating.

When we attend the midnight Mass and have our noche buena with our families, Janjan will probably be with his friends, sniffing rugby so that they can ignore the pangs of hunger and feel heavenly for some brief moments. He might be sleeping in a dark corner or aimlessly walking around Koronadal, looking without understanding at the streamers announcing that the city has been voted as the most business-friendly place in Mindanao and the most competitive. Sad but true, economic progress does not make vagrancy and juvenile delinquency vanish.

Several days ago, someone gave me a white, rubber wristband inscribed with the words, "Keep the promise." A cause-oriented group sells the wristband. It serves as a reminder to leaders of government who pledged during the United Nations Millennium Summit to fight social ills. If the leaders attain their goals, children like Janjan will have a bright future. We must be aware of the commitments of our leaders and let them know that we expect them to fulfill their pledges.

In the meantime, we shouldn't wait for our leaders to act. A friend told me that Janjan might actually be 11 or 12; he just didn't grow up. I can't imagine what will become of him and countless others if they continue to live in the streets for a few years more. People must extend to them a helping hand now.

Another friend related to me what she had learned about Christmas from a religious magazine. She read that since Jesus is the birthday celebrator, He should be the one receiving gifts. I reminded her that Jesus said that what we do to our neighbor we also do to Him. But I had to admit to her that when we give gifts on Christmas, we seldom think of Jesus, if at all.

I have never seen Janjan smile. When he stares at me, I can see the harshness of his world. A mixture of hate and sadness fills his eyes.

This Christmas, I don't think I will have complete happiness and peace of mind. Amid all the feasting and merriment, I will keep remembering one sullen boy who sees nothing but the cruelty and emptiness of life. Despite the tolling of bells and the dazzle of fireworks, he will hear only the deafening silence of the night. I will be wondering if out there in the cold streets, Janjan knows that it is the birthday of Jesus.

Rolly Jude M. Ortega, 20, is a second year AB Political Science student at Notre Dame of Marbel University in Koronadal City.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

THEY SAID

Trust and respect

"Trust is a basic prerequisite for doing business. Respect, on the other hand, is an elevated status that is much more difficult to earn."

—Land Bank of the Philippines' acting president and CEO Gilda Elepano-Pico

Silvery allure

"I can think of the thing that caused Judas to betray our Lord, and I sense it was more than the 30 pieces of silver."

—Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., suspecting the rape case against American servicemen will be settled with money

Unnoticed two minutes

WITH NOTHING ELSE BETTER TO DO, I got to watch on cable TV the BBC World Challenge. This I learned was an international contest on the theme "sustainable development" and the show was the presentation of winners.

The emcee mentioned that about 500 entries from some 100 countries were submitted and screened until there were only 12 finalists left. Each entry was a two-minute documentary on any subject relevant to the contest theme, and each of the 12 finalists was shown. Interestingly, the Philippines had an entry titled "Coconets—coconuts for erosion control."

Now, the mere fact that our entry was among the finalists was for me surprising enough. But when it was announced toward the end of the program that it won first place, I clapped and exclaimed "yahoooo!!!" The $20,000 prize was awarded to the coconets inventor, Dr. Justino Arboleda, who was present at the ceremony.

For the next two days, I hoped to find an article about this story in the INQUIRER, but sadly I saw none. Only the usual bad news about "Garci," corruption, crime, etc. For goodness sake, our country was just bestowed a big honor and nobody cared to report about it? Was the event not newsworthy enough? Was I the only proud Filipino in Manila when it happened? It's once in a blue moon that we get some well-deserved glory (without any hint of cheating, mind you), and it seems that the event did not merit even a line.

I am terribly disappointed.

—**ROBERTO PALILEO, M.D.**
palileo@pacific.net.ph

The INQUIRER proudly ran the story about Dr. Justino Arboleda's invention on the front page of its Nov. 21 issue.—Ed.

Great writing, great newspaper; and Merry Christmas

I JUST WANT TO THANK AMBETH Ocampo for his great articles about historical Filipino figures and events. I read the INQUIRER's Opinion section every day, as well as other sections. It is very refreshing to read Ocampo's articles after going through the other columns which deal mainly with the ills plaguing Philippine society.

Although I always read the articles of the other columnists (Amando Doronila, Neal Cruz, Conrado de Quiros, Isagani Cruz, etc.), I find that it is Ocampo providing a whiff of fresh air, especially after a long and busy day at the office.

By the way, Ramon Farolan's articles are great to read as well. I wish to thank both writers for doing a great job of writing.

Of course the INQUIRER, as a whole, is a great newspaper. Well done! Merry Christmas to all my *kababayans*.

—**BILL SABALBURO,**
cacio123@yahoo.com

Clueless letter-writer and columnist

I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON TWO letters from Elliot Anderson that appeared in the INQUIRER. The first referred to "the rape" in Subic. (PDI, 12/7/05) Thus far, the trial has not been held, rape has not been proven, so it should be alleged rape.

Anderson wrote that he would be "clueless" without the columns of Conrado de Quiros, a man who has a violent hatred for the United States. De Quiros' columns are fabricated from that hatred, without any investigation of facts. An excellent example was the allegation that the United States was responsible for the death of the Philippine Air Force personnel when the Huey helicopter they were riding in crashed. He stated that the Hueys, furnished by the United States, were "flying coffins" because they were refurbished and not state-of-the-art. Not only did he forget that it is rude to look a gift-horse in the mouth and that beggars cannot be choosers; he got his facts wrong.

The "flying coffin" was a US cargo plane long gone, the PAF needed helicopters immediately and the state-of-the-art would require extensive, expensive training; and refurbished aircraft work just fine. The US Air Force is just now retiring B-52 bombers that are over 40 years old and refurbished many times.

The topper came from the PAF spokesman who stated that the Huey was not a flying coffin, that it has served the PAF and other countries well, and the PAF did not get the unit from the United States but bought it from Singapore. So much for De Quiros' "clues."

Earlier, I read a letter from Anderson about US retirees not coming to the Philippines because they cannot avail themselves of their Medicare benefits here and the solution is for Philippine hospitals to seek US Medicare certification. (PDI, 9/23/05)

Wrong! There are many reasons why many US retirees don't come here and Medicare is not one of them. There is an official US government publication that every Medicare-eligible recipient gets each year. This is the "Medicare and You 2006." It clearly states that Medicare is not available outside the United States except in very rare, limited circumstances.

—**DON WILSON,**
drw102528@yahoo.com

Freedom's home

THE ATTENTION-GETTING ADVERTISEMENT in the INQUIRER (PDI, 12/12/05), which showed columnist Conrado de Quiros in a bishop's miter wrapped in the newspaper's logo, unfairly accused the INQUIRER and De Quiros of irresponsible journalism. I think that the people behind the ad were uncomprehending, to say the least.

First, it is widely known that the views of its columnists are independent of the INQUIRER's; therefore, the newspaper should not be responsible for them. Second, for telling the truth, the writer was maligned. And this was done through an ad published in the paper itself. Anyway, such is freedom in a democracy.

Going now to the core of the issue, I think De Quiros got the ire of some people because of his fierce outspokenness and his ferocious criticisms of wrongdoing and corruption in government. He was too effusive with the truth. And he went too far in being frank by writing about the hypocrisy in our society. That seemed to be his "mistake." His intelligent and penetrating insights stung the conscience of those we thought were incorruptible.

Kudos to De Quiros. May your paper continue to be freedom's home.

—**MYLO C. BARCIAL, MD,**
municipal health officer,
Salvador Benedicto, Negros Occidental

1-year report card on EVAT

AS A "FOREIGNER" RESIDING IN THE PHILIPpines, whose income is in dollars, I am also affected by the "double whammy" referred to in a letter that appeared in the Dec. 10 issue of the INQUIRER. My dollars buy less pesos, and my peso's buying power has been reduced by inflation. I guess I should complain if I were only thinking about myself.

I'm financially comfortable, therefore, I'm able to focus my concern on the millions of Filipinos whose income is not in dollars, and who are not getting financial support from overseas Filipinos.

Local income has not kept up with inflation. Local income has suffered from less and less purchasing power. The EVAT is new, therefore, its effects locally have been negative. I'm not an economist. However, international economists have expressed the opinion that in the long run, EVAT will be beneficial for the Philippine economy as a whole and, ultimately, for all Filipinos.

Only time will tell if the "experts" are right or wrong. Personally, I would like to see a "report card" one year from now before I venture an opinion. To mix metaphors, while you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Right now, the eggs are being broken.

—**MIKE FARRELL,**
firstsgtmike@hotmail.com

Honor among thieves

I READ WITH A HEAVY HEART THE INQUIRER editorial on former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano's testimony before the House of Representatives. (PDI, 12/10/05) The members of the committees jointly conducting the investigation were given the runaround and treated like fools. Knowing the millions of pesos we taxpayers pay to support our legislators, we demand that they do a better a job. Or we will be better off letting the local police extract the information from Garcillano at a much lower cost.

I am willing to bet my life our policemen will get the needed information given the chance to do it. We all know how efficient our police are in extracting information from shady characters.

The "soft treatment" that the House committees are giving Garcillano just confirms that our legislature is wasting people's money and time. What they are doing is tantamount to stealing. Their actuations put them and Garcillano on the same side. Which brings us to the conclusion that, indeed, in this country there is honor among thieves.

—**GIOVANNI RODRIGUEZ,**
gbr98@yahoo.com

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

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THE 'OO' RITUAL

Dancing, singing in 'Simbang Gabi'

By Romulo O. Ponte
Pangil, Laguna

SIMBANG GABI IN Pangil town in Laguna is not just plain *misa de gallo*, the evening or dawn novena Masses that start Dec. 16 to usher in the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is also an occasion for dancing, singing and offering of infants.

About a thousand mothers wearing bandanas usually flock to the Our Lady of Nativity Parish Church with their babies, dance and chant praises to God.

They recite the rosary and sing exaltations to the Nuestra Señora de la O (Our Lady of the O). Holding the Santo Niño de la O (Holy Child of the O), they dance to the children's Latin song "Dic Mihi" of the basic Christian catechism amid the beating of the drums.

Every Pangileño knows the tune by heart. The song enumerates the 12 important teachings of the Church.

The ritual is locally called "OO," which many people believe has been derived from the Latin devotional verses and exaltations that start with "O," such as: "O Maria! O Virgines Pulcra! O Mater Nostra!"

Long life

For the elderly, the singing and dancing start immediately after the dawn Mass. For infants and children, the activities take place at 4-5 p.m.

As early as 3 p.m., women and their toddlers troop to the church for the ritual. Residents say the event ensures good health for the young ones and long life, success and prosperity for the families.

The ceremony lasts more than an hour.

The daily ritual runs until Dec. 24, in time for the Pregnant Madonna's birth of Jesus on Christmas.

The Santo Niño dela O is hoisted by a chosen person who dances back and forth along the aisle as the churchgoers sing the "Dic Mihi."

PARENTS bring themselves and their children to the church daily to offer themselves to Jesus, the Sto. Niño de la O singing and dancing to the tune of "Dic Mihi," a Latin narration of the basic teachings of the Catholic Church.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

It is said that bearing the image during the annual feast day procession is a privileged task, for which people line up for years. For instance, the name listed in 2000 will have to wait for 2015 for the person's turn to carry the Santo Niño. If one has sinned, he or she would find the statue heavy; if guiltless, the statue becomes light.

The religious devotion was transformed into a Grand Pa-OO Festival or the Bandana Festival in January 1999, when parishioners started dancing the Santo Niño in the streets, waving pine leaves while dancing.

The date of the festival, now on its sixth year, was changed to Dec. 18 in later years.

Pregnant Madonna

A church document describes the pregnant Madonna as the life size statue of the Nuestra Señora de la O, which symbolizes the Blessed Mother heavy with the Child Jesus.

When one views the image closely, the Virgin's hand expresses amazement while her beautiful face looks intently beyond.

The Santo Niño de la O, on the other hand, depicts the Child Jesus inside the womb. Thus, it is hoisted on a wooden pole with a silver circle representing the womb.

The two images are also considered miraculous. The Nuestra Señora de la O, in particular, is known to help women who have difficulty in childbearing.

Four decades

The municipality of Pangil is as old as the Our Lady's Nativity Parish. It is now 427 years old.

Church documents showed that the first church was built by missionaries Fray Juan de Placencia and Fray Diego de Oropesa in Barangay Sulib in 1579. Made of bamboo, the church was destroyed by an earthquake and storms.

In 1611, a stone church and a convent were built under Fray Gonzalo del Robles. At that time, the church was the biggest in Laguna.

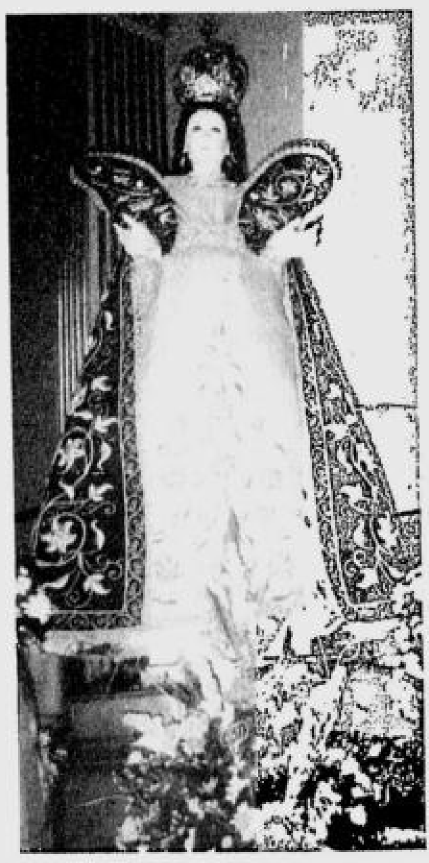
Today, the convent of Pangil remains a historic place for one memorable reason: it was host to Prince Carlos III of Spain in 1743. The prince stayed in Pangil and spent time hunting in the forest and swimming in the river, which is now called the "Bambang Hari" by natives.

He stayed in the town for three or four years, church records show, and returned to Spain in 1759. Five years later, in 1764, he was crowned King Carlos III after the death of King Fernando VI, his stepbrother to his father, King Felipe V.

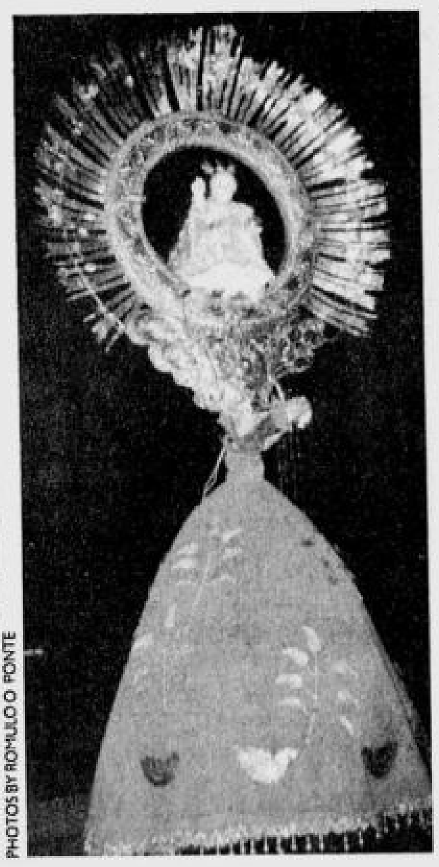
Upon his ascension to the throne of Spain as King Charles III, he sent the statues of Santo Niño de la O and Nuestra Señora de la O to Pangil as a sign of his gratitude and appreciation for the hospitality accorded to him.

The bandanas used by the festival participants, according to old Pangileños, seek to recall their ancestors who were covering their heads as they received the two gifts from King Carlos III along the Laguna Lake on a rainy day of December 1764.

They sang and danced in extreme joy along the streets, carrying the images on their way to the parish church.



NUESTRA Señora de la O



SANTO Niño de la O

PHOTOS BY ROMULO O. PONTE

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Lafayette mine spill fuels fish scare

GUBAT, SORSOGON—A FISH SCARE IS GRIPping three coastal towns in Sorsogon as stories of cases of mercury poisoning fueled fear among townsfolk here, two months after the Lafayette mine spill in the island town of Rapu-Rapu, Albay.

In this town and the towns of Prieto Diaz and Barcelona, the adjacent towns facing the island of Rapu-Rapu, the fish markets are virtually empty of buyers.

Even an announcement from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) that fish from the three towns were safe to eat did not dampen the continuing fish scare.

Gubat Mayor Deogracias Ramos Jr. said the stories and rumors regarding alleged fish poisoning had been hard to crack even with the assurance from the BFAR that the fish caught here were safe to eat.

"The problem is how to convince the people that the seas and fish here are free from mercury contamination," Ramos said.

On Dec. 19, BFAR Director Malcolm Sarmiento assured the people of Prieto Diaz that the most recent fish samples taken from the three towns were found negative of mercury contamination.

Sarmiento said the BFAR office, in coordination with local government units (LGUs), conducted a series of laboratory tests on fish samples taken at different times this month.

He said the first and the last batches of fish samples were found to have contained tolerable levels of mercury below 0.5 ppm while the second batch of sample fish had high levels of mercury.

But Sarmiento said the second batch of fish samples had been revalidated because the gathering of the specimens broke protocol. He said the result of the revalidation turned negative.

Evan Eva, president of the Gubat Fish Vendors Association, complained that the fish scare, going on for three weeks now, left their families starving.

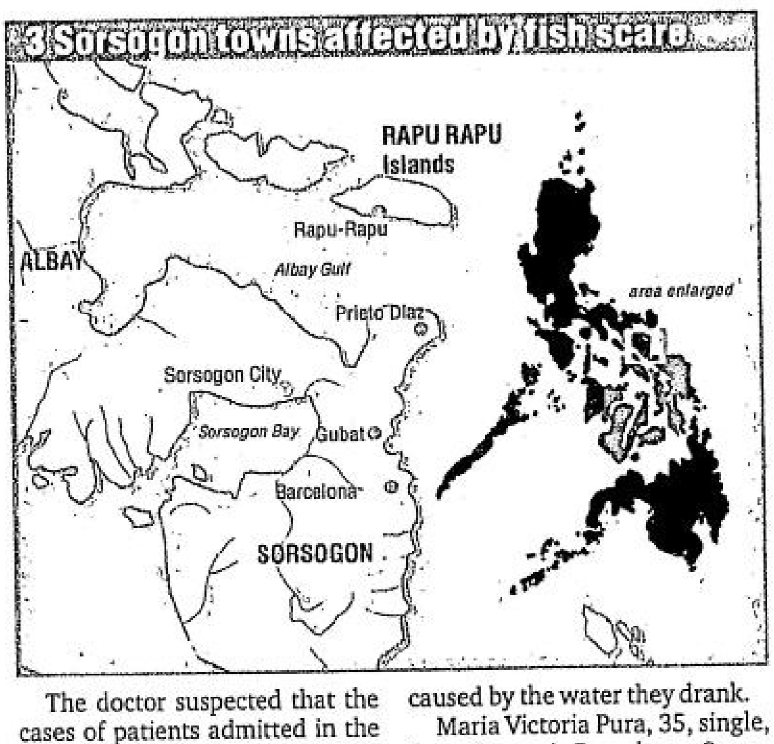
Eva said fishermen had stopped fishing because no one would buy fish caught from the seas around here.

Ramos dismissed claims of mercury poisoning and said he himself bought and ate fish caught in Gubat town.

Dr. Juliana Encinas-Cariño, chief of the Gubat District Hospital, said they had no confirmed cases so far even as rumors regarding fish poisoning teemed.

Encinas-Cariño said suspected cases of mercury poisoning had turned out to be gastroenteritis cases and reaction from the filariasis medicine administered to patients.

She said mercury, when ingested in lethal dose, does not present gastroenteritis problems but respiratory ones.



The doctor suspected that the cases of patients admitted in the hospital, who were suffering from loose bowel movement and vomiting, were more likely caused by the water they drank.

Maria Victoria Pura, 35, single, from Bangati, Barcelona, Sorsogon, is now confined at the Gubat District Hospital.

She is suspected to be one of the people here who fell ill after eating local fish called *butlog*.

Pura said that after eating *butlog*, she felt sick and her red rashes and blisters developed in her body.

Encinas-Cariño said Pura's case had been found to be an allergic reaction to the filariasis drug that was administered to her.

Rodrigo Espineda, 53, tricycle driver, would not take chances after he and his wife Sofia, a public school teacher, suffered excruciating headache after eating fish caught here.

Espineda said they were only relieved of the headache after taking several glasses of lemonade and different kinds of tablets.

But, he said, after relief from the headache he suffered itchiness all over his body and his skin peeled off after several days.

Mayor Gregorio Azore of Barcelona, Sorsogon believes the seas here are contaminated with mercury from the Lafayette mine spill. *Juan Escandor Jr., PDI S. Luzon Bureau*

Ecija orphanage turns into fantasy land for children

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

PALAYAN CITY—MELIZA CAba, 11, has been away from her native Mandaue City in Cebu for five years and has not seen her father and 11 siblings since.

She remembers only the names of her five siblings. Deep in her heart, there's that longing to be home, to be with her family especially this Christmas.

But the orphanage where she is staying and her elder sister, Arliza, can't bring them home for lack of resources.

The longing and the silent grief stay. For how long, she doesn't know.

On Monday, everything turned surreal for Meliza. She was in "dreamland" during a Christmas party at the provincial convention center here.

The party, initiated by Vice Gov. Mariano Cristino Joson and organized by his friends, was for 192 orphans and abused and handicapped children from two orphanages and a girls' home in the province.

At least 100 selected children from different villages here and in nearby Bongabon town also attended the party that ended at 9 p.m. Monday.

"Happy. Very, very happy," Meliza, whose mother died while giving birth to her 11th child, told the INQUIRER.

She, like the others, let herself get lost in the surreal world of lights and sounds, a fountain made of candies, flowers that swayed upon the clapping of hands, balloons and trees teeming with caterpillars and insects.

They were also treated to a puppet and magic show and a variety show attended by TV stars Mark Herras, Ryza Cenon, Julia Clarete and John Knight.

Food and goodies were more than enough and the children each received gifts.

Joson said the attention given to these children must be "extra special" due to the hardships that they endured.

"They have a very sad life. We need to make them happy … to give them hope for a better tomorrow," he said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CHILDREN enjoy the transformation of their orphanage in Cabanatuan City into fantasy land.

He said he had visited them many times in their respective "homes"—at the Bahay ni San Jose Home for God's Special Children in Barangay Papaya, San Antonio, Nueva Ecija; Sta. Marina Omura Home in Cabanatuan City; and the Home for Girls in Barangay Singalat here.

Like other benefactors who support the operation of the orphanages Bahay ni San Jose and Sta. Marina Omura, Joson donates his monthly salary to these institutions aside from giving other assistance.

He also provides help to the Home for Girls that is run by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Central Luzon.

With the support of Gov. Tomas Joson III, the party was organized by the vice governor's friends, and Ryan Cuevas of Cabanatuan City.

Social worker Emelita Cruz-Bolivar said 68 girls, ages five to 17, who are in "special difficult circumstances," are housed at the Home for Girls.

Bolivar said 80 percent of them were victims of sexual abuse, mostly by their relatives.

At the Bahay ni San Jose, the wards' ages ranged from one to 12, including those who were abandoned, neglected, and the handicapped.

Sister Leoncia Mateo said they educate and train the children through the help of benefactors. Once they reach the age of 13, the children are referred to other institutions for their education.

At the Sta. Marina Omura Home, Sister Mary Pauline Tejero said their wards, mostly girls, included street children and those abandoned by their parents and relatives.

The home takes care of their needs until their foster families take them when they reach 20.

Tejero said they are supported by benefactors from the Philippines and Japan.

"They were happy. This [treat] was unexpected. They will never forget this throughout their life," said Mateo.

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Blackouts continue to hound Ilonggos

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—ILONGGOS CONtinue to face the prospect of blackouts after the holiday season despite a recent increase in electricity rates that would have assured adequate fuel supply for the power firm here.

The Panay Power Corp. (PPC), the city's sole power provider, said it could sustain its operations until the first week of next year as a result of an order of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) granting a provisional increase of rates to the Panay Electric Co. (Peco).

Peco, the city's sole power distributor, buys its power supply from PPC.

PPC vice president Arman Lapus said in a statement that its fuel supplier, Shell Philippines, has agreed to continue the delivery of fuel while they discuss the settlement of PPC's arrears.

Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas said the National Power Corp. (Napocor) would also provide a 15-day fuel supply to PPC so that PPC could continue operating its power plant until Jan. 8.

"Nothing is definite after Jan. 8 but everybody is trying to work out a permanent solution," Treñas told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Treñas cited the earlier assurance of Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla of continued power supply to Iloilo City, the regional center of Western Visayas.

The PPC earlier said it would be forced to shut down its 72-megawatt plant because it could not pay its fuel purchases from Shell due to underpayments from Peco since September. Lapus said PPC's standing debts because of the underpayments is more than P364 million.

The ERC last week granted a provisional authority for Peco to pay PPC's generation cost. It also allowed Peco to increase its rates by P2 per kilowatt-hour to P6.5121.

The commission also ordered Peco to connect to the Cebu-Negros-Panay Grid as soon as possible so that it could tap into the power supply of Napocor.

Lapus said the provisional generation rate that Peco would collect from consumers would only cover PPC's actual expenses in running the plant but not to recover its "full costs" and generate any profit.

"If we are unable to collect our full generation cost soon, we may find ourselves at risk of not meeting our obligations and defaulting on our loans and being forced out of business," said Lapus.

But consumer groups accused Peco and the Mirant-owned PPC of "exploiting and abusing their market power over the consumers."

Melvin Purzuelo, convenor of the Responsible Ilonggos for Sustainable Energy, said consumers should press for the reconnection of Peco to the Panay Grid and use the grid's 40 mw as base load.

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3 guards relieved for jailbreak

By Leila B. Salaverria

FOLLOWING THE ESCAPE OF THREE of its detainees, the Bureau of Immigration yesterday relieved three guards from their posts and formed a fact-finding committee to investigate the incident.

To avoid suspicions of a whitewash, the committee will be composed solely of Department of Justice prosecutors, according to its Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr.

The panel has 10 working days to finish the probe and come out with its report and recommendations.

BI intelligence chief Faizal Hussin, who had been accused of connivance in the illegal deportation of kidnap suspect Zhang Du, is also investigating the escape.

One of the escaped detainees, Sri Lankan Jayamaha Mudalege Don Keerthi Jamayaha, is also a suspect in the illegal deportation case.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) had filed complaints against Hussin, Jamayaha and seven others in connection with the illegal deportation.

An NBI official who condemned the escape said agents had been looking into the possibility of making Jamayaha a state witness. Jamayaha escaped with Chinese nationals Tan Tin Shao and Go Sak Ping on Dec. 19.

Although Hussin is conducting his own investigation, findings of the fact-finding committee of DOJ prosecutors would take precedence, Fernandez said. He added that Hussin had been looking into the possible liability of his own people in the matter.

"Hussin will also be investigated by the fact-finding committee," Fernandez said in a phone interview, adding that the involvement of insiders was one of the angles to be checked.

The committee is headed by Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco with State Prosecutors Olivia Non and Peter Ong as members.

The jail guards relieved from their posts were identified as Carlos Garcia, a member of the BI Civil Security Unit; and Antonio Tantay and Ray Abrau, who are contractual confidential agents.

They were on duty when the three detainees escaped.

Fernandez said it had been the practice at the bureau to deploy confidential agents as guards at the detention center as long as they are accompanied by a bureau official.

For his part, Hussin said in a statement that he had dispatched two teams of BI intelligence operatives to hunt down the escaped foreigners.

Pictures of the escapees have been posted at all immigration counters of international ports in the country.

The Chinese and Sri Lankan Embassies had already been alerted about the escape and advised not to issue travel documents to the suspects.

It's a dog's life in QC

By DJ Yap

NOT ON MY PROPERTY, YOU DON'T.

Bothered by dogs that scoot over to other people's backyards whenever nature calls, a Quezon City councilor has proposed banning the act altogether.

"Habitual defecation or urination" by canines on other people's property is just one of several "prohibited acts" in a proposed ordinance seeking to regulate dog ownership in the city.

I CAN'T HELP IT— I'M A DOG!

Another provision sure to raise a howl among dog lovers is the ban on the persistent barking, howling or crying of dogs "resulting in the unreasonable deprivation of the peace and quiet" of sleeping neighbors.

Authored by City Councilor Bernadette Herrera-Dy, the proposed ordinance is aimed at making dog owners "extra-responsible" in taking care of their pets.

Other don'ts

Under the ordinance, allowing dogs to stray, or keeping them despite signs of rabies, are also prohibited. Another no-no: Dogs who attack persons without provocation.

The measure also requires owners to register dogs, which are at least three months old, at the office of the city veterinarian, who shall keep records of the canines, including information like name, breed, color, sex, vaccination date, as well as their owner's address.

The canine registration should be renewed every year, with a P100 fee.

Owners found harboring unregistered dogs would be charged double the registration fee, while those under other prohibited acts shall be fined P1,000, or suffer a jail term of not more than a year.

A team of dog captors will round up strays in the city to prevent the spread of rabies. Any captured dog shall be kept for a maximum of three days, and then subjected to the most humane means of extermination to be determined by the city veterinarian.

Fire spoils holiday mood

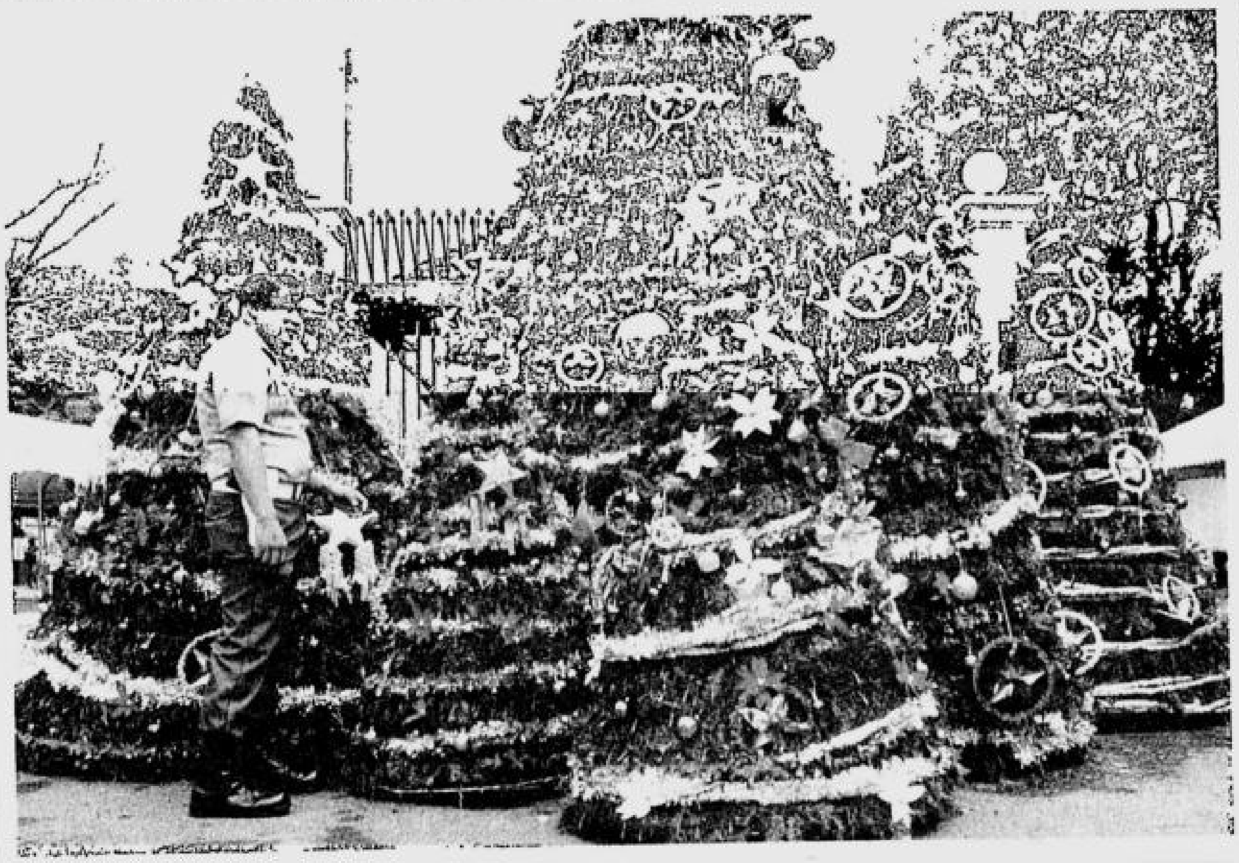
MORE THAN 30 FAMILIES LOST THEIR homes after a big fire hit a crowded community in Cainta, Rizal on Tuesday night, four days before Christmas Day.

The fire was traced to a two-story house made of light materials in Parola, Barangay San Andres, investigator SFO3 Rene Servillejo told the INQUIRER. Teresa Miguel, owner of the house, said the fire started at the ceiling on the second floor. She managed to save her five children although she sustained burns on her face and hands, Servillejo added.

Because the houses in the area were built close to one another, the fire spread rapidly.

Servillejo said the area was notorious for illegal electricity connections. "We have been warning people about the dangers of illegal connections, but many do not listen," he said.

The homeless are temporarily staying in a covered court near the area. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*



REM ZAMORA

NOT ORDINARY YULE TREES

These trees near the Malacañang gates may be lovely to look at but don't get too close. They are trimmed with barb wire taken from barriers that kept rallyists away from the Palace.

A 'green' wish for Christmas

THEIR CHRISTMAS WISH IS SIMPLE: SPARE the trees.

Environmentalists have renewed their call for the Manila City government to stop cutting trees in the contested Arroceros Forest Park after finding out that more trees planted beyond the area where a teachers' building is being constructed have allegedly been marked by City Hall workers for cutting.

Environmentalists have asked the courts to stop the project, saying it would result in the destruction of lush foliage inside what they call Manila's "last lung."

"They cannot be stopped, but I hope they spare the trees," said nature advocate Fr. Robert Reyes. *Tina G. Santos*

3-in-1 card for Marikina employees

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

STARTING NEXT YEAR, MARIKINA City Hall employees will use just one card to do the following: withdraw money, log in and out of the office, and for identification purposes.

The three-in-one Integrated Coverage for Employees (ICE) will be distributed to the almost 2,000 employees starting next week.

First in Metro Manila

"This is probably the first in Metro Manila. This will be very convenient for our employees," City Councilor Donn Favis told the INQUIRER.

The Marikina government had coordinated with the Philippine Veterans Bank, which handles the city's salary payments, on the ICE Card.

The printing of the cards took two months to complete.

Pictures and signatures of the employees will be taken tomorrow, Favis said.

No more ATM, ID cards

The ICE Card will replace the employees' existing ATM and ID cards.

The city government will also install a new equipment where employees will have to use their ICE Card as well as their thumb prints to log in and out of work.

"This will make our payroll more accurate," said Favis who also heads the city management information system.

Deterrent

The new setup will also discourage a common practice among some employees who have made it a habit to ask their friends to log their "in" or "out" working hours under the bundy clock system.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 22, 2005
4th Week of Advent

1st Reading: 1 S 1:24-28
Gospel: Luke 1:46-56

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit exults in God my savior!

He has looked upon his servant in her lowliness, and people forever will call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me, Holy is his Name!

From age to age his mercy extends to those who live in his presence.

He has acted with power and done wonders, and scattered the proud with their plans.

He has put down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up those who are downtrodden.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He held out his hand to Israel, his servant, for he remembered his mercy, even as he promised our fathers, Abraham and his descendants forever."

Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home.

Commentary

The story breaks into a song, a psalm of praise to Yahweh the Holy One. In Mary's mouth we hear the hunger and the hopes of a people over centuries aching for the One who would come to set them free. This is Mercy that is intent on doing wonders and protecting the people. This is the work of God and of her child: to put down the mighty from their thrones and lift the lowly (as she has been lifted); to scatter the proud-hearted; to fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. This is revolution—three of them: within the heart, within economics and politics. This is 'the remembrance of mercy' for those who wait on God. Do we wait on God? How's our heart today? And our economics and politics? How are the poor and downtrodden doing because of our obedience and praise of God?

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New Chief Justice an intellectual

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THE NEW CHIEF JUSTICE, ARTEMIO PAnganiban, doesn't come from an ivy league law school like the University of the Philippines or the Ateneo University, from which most of our topnotch lawyers graduated. Panganiban is a product of the Far Eastern University (FEU) law school, but he was a bar topnotcher.

The new Chief Justice is probably the most prolific writer of all members of the bench. He has written countless books on law and politics. His ponencias read like literary masterpieces, according to some of my lawyer-friends. In short, the new Chief Justice is an intellectual.

* * *

The family of former President Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino has lost the Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac. The vast sugar estate has become the centerpiece of the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. Under the program, vast agricultural lands are to be distributed to the farmer-tenants who have toiled them for decades.

When the CARP was carried out during the time of President Aquino, Hacienda Luisita was excluded. *Tita* Cory's family came out with the story that the farmer-tenants were business partners. The Cojuangco family issued stock certificates to the farmer-tenants. The certificates were useless. The Cojuangcos didn't share the earnings from the estate with the farmers. That was the reason for the strike at Hacienda Luisita last year.

The Cojuangco family, taking advantage of its friendship with the Arroyo administration, asked for help from the military in suppressing the farmers' "rebellion." The battle for Luisita last year resulted in the deaths of several pickets. It was reminiscent of the Mendiola Massacre during the early days of Cory Aquino in power. It's a good thing the Arroyo administration realized it was held under the spell of the Cojuangcos and decided to favor the farmers. And because the government favored the farmers, Cory Aquino sided with the President's critics, demanding that GMA resign. *Tita* Cory keeps up the barrage against GMA. The Arroyo administration, with its built-in power, got even with *Tita* Cory by expediting the distribution of Hacienda Luisita among the farmer-occupants.

* * *

Reports say Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte could replace the late National Bureau of Investigation head Reynaldo Wycoco. Vote for Duterte. He is very much qualified to head the premier law enforcement agency. Duterte is a disciplinarian, a strong-willed but fair leader, and a nemesis of hardened criminals. For several years now, Davao City has been a firecracker-free and gunless city during New Year's Eve. His constituents obey Duterte who had explained he didn't want anybody hurt during the celebration.

Davao City is one of the safest places in the country. Criminals in the city have fled to other places, scared of the so-called Davao Death Squad. We need an NBI chief who would be feared by criminals and respected by subordinates.

METROBRIEFS

Gotcha!

AGENTS of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested a suspected illegal recruiter on Tuesday for defrauding nine US visa applicants of more than a million pesos. NBI officer in charge Nestor Mantaring identified the suspect as Vilma Emnas Gonzales, of 456 Geronimo St., Sampaloc, Manila. She was arrested after her victims filed a complaint against her. Investigation conducted by the Interpol showed that the suspect had demanded P20,000 to P300,000 from her victims in exchange for processing their applications for immigrant visas and employment abroad. The documents she gave them, however, turned out to be fraudulent. *Margaux C. Ortiz*

Keep it down, please

TAKING advantage of the noise coming from a nearby Christmas party, four minors detained at the Pasay City Youth Homes (PCYH) escaped after midnight yesterday. Initial investigation revealed that the boys, aged 12 to 17, destroyed the lock to the fire exit on the third floor to escape, said Elvie Llemos, a staff of the Pasay City Social Welfare and Development. One of them, however, was later recaptured. Witnesses said the racket coming from a Christmas party near the center could have concealed the noise the boys made while hammering the fire exit's lock. The five are facing drugs, robbery, theft and malicious mischief cases in the Pasay City courts. *Jocelyn R. Uy*

Fake fastfood employees

OFFICIALS of Jollibee Food Corp. (JFC) have warned the public against a group of unscrupulous individuals posing as employees of the firm. They issued the warning after several suppliers called up to verify orders placed by certain individuals claiming to be JFC representatives. According to officials, the group's modus operandi was to call up suppliers unfamiliar with Jollibee's purchasing process. A member would place an order and send a purchase order by fax. The ordered items would then be picked up by the group at the supplier's office. The whole process is done close to the weekend so that the supplier would not be able to verify the order with JFC. Jollibee officials urged those who were contacted by the group to call the police or the JFC purchasing division at 634-1111.

Mass for Sr. Mariani moved

THE funeral Mass for Sr. Mariani Dimaranan, who died on Dec. 17, has been moved from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Dec. 23. It will be held at La Verna II, behind St. Joseph's College in Quezon City. Dimaranan will be laid to rest at the Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina City after the Mass.

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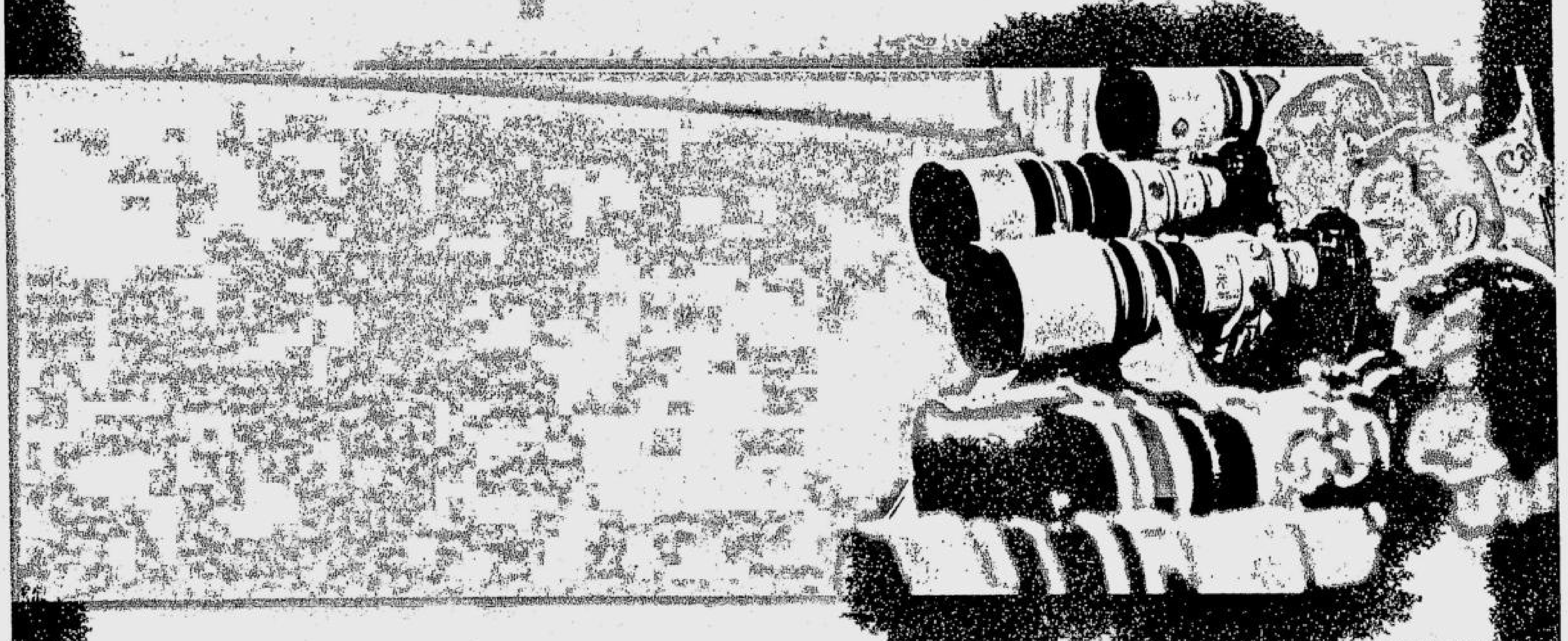

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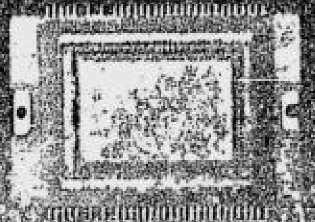

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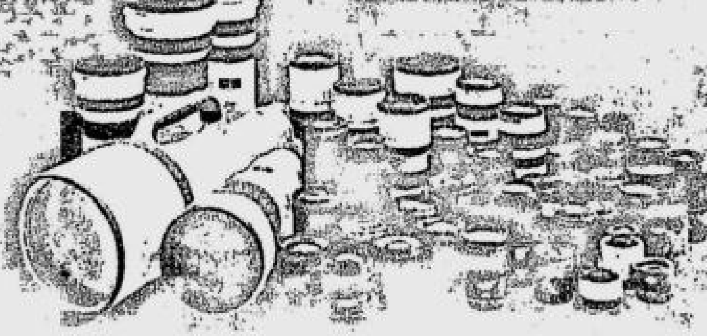

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LEO Avenido of Talk 'N 'Text rams into Chris Porter of Ginebra in their game last night.

RUDY ESPERAS

Kings turn back Pals

By June Navarro

CHRIS PORTER, THRIVING IN the paint, pulled Barangay Ginebra out of a slump via a 97-92 win over Talk 'N Text in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference last night at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Fresh from a stint in China, Porter came up with 31 points and 24 rebounds, including two defensive boards in the closing seconds that snuffed the life out of the Phone Pals.

The Gin Kings, who stopped a three-game slide, picked up their eighth victory in 15 games and must conquer the Alaska Aces on Christmas Day to at least earn a playoff for an automatic semifinal seat.

"He (Porter) gave us a different look, especially inside," said Barangay Ginebra coach Siot Tanquingcen of his new reinforcement who took over from Sean Lampley, who is in the sidelines due to a pulled hamstring.

The 27-year-old Porter lived up to his billing after grabbing two rebound just as the Phone Pals were making a last-ditch effort to salvage the game.

Porter grabbed Leo Avenido's muffed free throw and pulled down the leather again after a desperation three by Willie Miller to seal the Phone Pals' seventh defeat after 15 games.

With the Purefoods Chunkee Giants already in the semifinals, the Gin Kings, Phone Pals, Red Bull Barako and Air21 are in a tough race for the other available automatic semis slot.

Damien Cantrell had 21 points and 14 rebounds while Miller added 18 for the Phone Pals, who must beat San Miguel Beer on Friday to keep themselves in the running for a semifinal playoff.

The scores:

First Game

BARANGAY GINEBRA 97—Porter 31, Helterbrand 14, Caguioa 12, Santos 12, Menk 11, Dimaunahan 6, Holper 4, Macapagal 3, Adducul 2, Seigle 2, Salvacion 0.

TALK 'N TEXT 92—Cantrell 21, Miller 18, Alapag 11, Avenido 11, Belano 9, Telan 8, Cardona 6, Taulava 6, Carey 2, Gelig 0.

Quarters: 22-26, 48-47, 69-67, 97-92

GMA hands cash incentives to RP medalists today

By Marc Anthony Reyes

HONG KONG—AFTER A WELL-deserved if brief vacation, the national athletes will receive today their cash rewards for giving the country its first ever overall title in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games recently.

A total of P25 million will be given to the Philippine athletes who won 113 gold medals on top of 84 silvers and 94 bronzes to grab the overall crown from 2003 winner Vietnam and perennial powerhouse Thailand.

President Macapagal-Arroyo herself will hand out in Malacañang the cash incentive to the triumphant Filipinos, who dominated beyond their expectations the SEA Games held in Metro Manila and other parts of Luzon and the Visayas from Nov. 27 to Dec. 5.

The windfall comes right after the athletes were treated to an unprecedented holiday trip in this chilly, bustling city complete with a visit to the newly opened Disneyland and pocket money of $300 each.

"Winning the SEA Games overall championship is a feat worthy of this kind of reward," said First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, who headed the Team Philippines in the three-day merry-making along with First Children, Rep. Mikey Arroyo and Luli Arroyo.

PEREZ

The First Gentleman also reported that private sponsors who helped raised P168 million for the SEAG build-up have also expressed intention to contribute once again for the athletes' international training leading to the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Butch Ramirez said the Hong Kong trip was funded by the First Gentleman Foundation from its savings from the money raised during the pledging session in Malacañang with top businessmen.

"By all indications, the same sports godfathers have already stated their willingness to help us once again," said Ramirez, who took the last plane out Tuesday to prepare the checks for the athletes.

The gold medalists will get P100,000 in accordance with the Athletes Incentive Act, while the silver winners will receive P50,000. Bronze medalists will take home P10,000.

A separate prize scheme will be given for team winners.

"I'm very thankful for this trip and happy because of the recognition given to us," said Shiela Mae Perez, who won three gold medals in diving.

She will represent Team Philippines when it is honored by the Philippine Sportswriters Association as its Athlete of the Year awardee during the annual PSA Awards Night next month.

Elbow on Espino costs Thomas ₱150,000 fine

OMAR THOMAS THREW THE most expensive wayward elbow in Philippine Basketball Association history.

The pro league yesterday fined the Coca-Cola import P150,000 for viciously hitting Sta. Lucia Realty's Dennis Espino on the nape Sunday.

THOMAS

It was the biggest penalty slapped on an individual for a single-motion infraction that caused a nasty cut on Espino that took seven stitches to close.

Provoked by an earlier Espino elbow on his kisser, Thomas retaliated a few possessions later after a rebound play and got a second-degree flagrant foul which also meant an automatic one-game suspension.

Espino escaped suspension and fetched a technical instead in the game won handily by the Realtors.

It was the most costly penalty since Jimwell Torion of Red Bull broke the nose of Talk 'N Text's Jimmy Alapag with a clothesline during the semifinals of the 2002 All-Filipino Cup.

Torion was fined P70,000 on top of a six-month suspension.

In the case of Thomas, he got three times the fine imposed on San Miguel's Art Long for figuring in a brawl with Antonio Lang of Red Bull during the 2002 Commissioner's Cup.

Thomas will sit out the Tigers' final assignment in the classification round of the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference against Red Bull Barako on Friday.

The Tigers (6-9) are in danger of finishing dead last in the preliminaries with another defeat.

The ninth-ranked team will battle the eighth-seeded squad with a twice-to-win handicap in the survival round for a passage into the wildcard phase.

June Navarro

SMC, sports backers receive PSA citations

BUSINESS GIANT SAN MIGUEL CORPORATION, a long-time supporter and friend of local sports, heads entities and personalities to be cited by the Philippine Sportswriters Association for doing their share in making 2005 a banner year.

The 100-member, 56-year-old association unanimously will cite SMC for its role in the successful campaign of 13 National Sports Associations it supported in the recent 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

Sixteen others, including two professional boxers, will also receive citations during the PSA awards night on Jan. 14 at the Manila Pavilion.

These are First Gentleman Foundation, Grandmaster Mark Paragua, golfer Jayvie Agojo, Manila Sports Council, JVC (Japan Victor Company), boxer Brian Viloria, former POC President Celso Dayrit, PSC Chair Butch Ramirez, Asian Formula 3, Joseph Dumuk, V-League, boxer Boom Boom Bautista, practical shooter Jag Lejano, Eddie Torres, the Philippine Practical Shooting team and equestrienne Toni Leviste.

On top of the honor roll is Team Philippines, named Athlete of the Year by the country's oldest media group for its historic overall triumph in the SEA Games.

Twenty-one athletes, most of them multiple gold medal

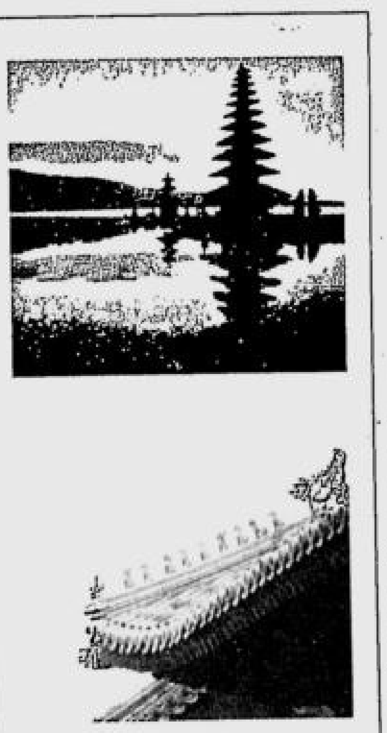
winners in the SEA Games, make up the roster of major awardees.

These are Alex Pagulayan (billiards), Juvic Pagunsan (golf), Harry Tanamor (amateur boxing), Maristela Torres (athletics), Amaya Paz (archery), Miguel Molina (swimming), Sheila Mae Perez (diving), Benjamin Tolentino (rowing), John Baylon (judo), Cecil Mamiit (tennis), Suhod Hakim (traditional boat racing), Manuel Maya (TBR), Junray Dayumad (TRB), Ruperto Sabijon (TRB), Ricky Sardena (TRB), Rene Catalan (wushu), Manny Pacquiao (pro boxing), Arwind Santos (amateur basketball), Eric Menk (pro basketball), Jennifer Rosales (pro golf), and Warren Davadilla (pro cycling).

According to PSA President Jimmy Cantor of Malaya, Filipino gold medalists in the SEA Games will automatically receive special citations during the rites to be telecast by NBN Channel 4.

This year, SMC donated P100 million to the First Gentleman Foundation to help bankroll the training expenses of athletes in 13 sports disciplines. The NSAs which the company supported accounted for 56 of the 113 total gold medals won by Team Philippines, with wushu accounting for 11, the most by any RP squad.

Another association which made SMC proud is the Philippine Dragon Boat Federation, which swept the six golds staked in traditional boat racing in a shining achievement that easily won for the PDBF the most outstanding NSA award.



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Amit joining women's World Pool tilt

AFTER TAKING THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN Games by storm, Rubilen "Bingkay" Amit is now looking to conquer the world.

The 24-year-old accounting graduate from the University of Santo Tomas is now sharpening her skills for the ultimate test in pool—the World Pool Championship.

"*Kaya ring gawin ng mga Pinay ang kayang gawin ng mga Pinoy* (We can also do what our male players can)," said Amit, noting the world championship romps of Efren "Bata" Reyes and Alex Pagulayan.

The women's version of the WPC will be held this March in Taiwan. Waiting for her there are the likes of world renowned lady pool sharks Karen Corr and Alison Fisher.

Her good friend and fellow national player Iris Rañola had been there before, but she didn't last long.

Amit is unperturbed. "*Pare-pareho lang naman kaming kayang umubos ng bola* (All of us can clear the table)," she said.

It may sound cocky, but she's got the game to back it up.

The pretty Cebuana stamped her name in local pool history when she went undefeated in the qualifying round of this year's Philippine 9-Ball Open to become the first and only female player to make the cut in the main draw of any national open for men.

Amit is also untouchable by her peers in the region, sweeping her way to the gold medal in both the 8-ball and 9-ball singles of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

She capped her dominating show with an 11-0 thrashing of Malaysian Suhana Dewi B Sabtu in the titular match of 9-ball.

Amit credited her current form to the training program facilitated by billiards godfather Aristeo "Putch" Puyat.

"Our game improved and we developed confidence further when Sir Putch allowed us to play against our world-class male players," she said in Filipino."

The bigwigs are also taking notes.

The former Asian 8-ball queen can run out, clean up and play safe. She can hole in a bank, carom, combination and even jump shot.

"She's fundamentally sound and she has the patience needed for the game," said Boyet Asonto, Amit's longtime mentor. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

AMIT: Good for two golds. AP

SBP CHAMPS: San Beda College hacked out a thrilling 59-52 overtime win over Ateneo de Davao in Silay City to win the Small Basketeers Philippines championship in the Milo-sponsored national finals featuring four regional champion teams from all over the country. St. Scholastica's College-Pampanga took third and University of San Carlos Cebu finished fourth.

Superal sisters top Young Guns Invt'l

CRYSTAL SUPERAL RALLIED FROM seven shots down with a closing two-over-par 74 yesterday then nipped Korean Young Kyung Woo in a sudden-death playoff to capture the girls' 13-14 years crown in the Young Guns 2005 Golf Invitational Tournament at the Tagaytay Midlands course.

Providing the drama that was missing in most of the age-group brackets where runaway winners emerged, Superal parred the first extra hole, the par-4 No. 1, against the bogey of Woo, who collapsed with an 81 in the final round. Superal and Woo finished with similar 232s.

Crystal's younger sister Princess completed a family double by winning the girls' 8 and under by 18 strokes also over a Korean, Min Gi Kim. Princess shot a 9-hole 35 for 114.

Debbie and Angelika de Villa also pulled off a family double with Debbie beating elder sister Linnel for the girls' 15-17 years and Angelika, showing remarkable improvement, coasting to a 9-shot win in the girls' 11 years.

While Miguel Tabuena handily claimed the boys' 11 years crown, Miko Alejandro outsteadied two-day leader Miko Yee for the boys' 15-17 years plum. Tabuena's 77-233 was 13 better than Remo Fueg's 83-246 while Alejandro, two behind Yee before the round, had a 77-234 and won by two.

Completing the winners list were Justin Dy, Felicia Medalla, Andie Unson, Si Woo Kim, Katya dela Cruz, Big Jan Ybanez and Byung Joo Park in the tourney sponsored by Philippine Airlines, ICTSI (International Container Terminal Services Inc.), Heinz UFC, Production Village Corp., Media Circuit Inc., Pair Cargo, Golf Depot, Sunbolt Sports Drink, Earl McCarthy, Call Asia Inc., URC-Universal Robina Corp. and Tagaytay Midlands Golf Club.

Young Guns president Luigi Tabuena handed out the trophies to the winners and promised an even bigger tourney next year. This year's field of 120 jungolfers was the biggest in its four-year history.

Unson, the reigning US Kids world champion, posted the biggest winning margin of 32 strokes in the girls' 10 years division.

The final results:

8 under boys: 125 Justin Dy, 131 Rupert Saragoza, 147 Lanz Uy; Girls-114 Princess Superal, 132 Min Gi Kim,134 Abby Arevalo

9 years: Boys-224 AR Ramos, 227 Miggy Yee, 241 Fidel Concepcion Girls-293 Felicia Medalla, 324 Dana Gonzales, 325 Dania Uy

10 years: Boys-217 Si Woo Kim, 229 JR Gonzales, 248 Stephen Sy; Girls-237 Andie Unson, 269 Marvi Monsalve, 293 Si Eun Ahn

11 years: Boys-233 Miguel Tabuena, 246 Remo Fueg, 255 Michael Limandibrata; Girls-236 Angela de Villa, 245 Christina Potenciano, 273 Ann Sabater

12 years: Boys-246 Big John Ybanez, 257 Don Martin Fernandez, 269 Jovi Manglapus; Girls-260 Katya dela Cruz, 263 Stephanie Olea

13-14 years: Boys-228 Byung Ju Park, 229 Gi Hun Kim, 234 Jik-jik Abdon; Girls- 232 Crystal Superal, Young Kyung Woo (Superal won via playoff). 234 Cyna Marie Rodriguez15-17 years: Boys-234 Miko Alejandro, 236 Miko Yee, 243 Woong Jin Ahn; Girls-239 Debbie de Villa, 266 Linnel de Villa

Tugade-Enriquez rules Founders Cup

LAWYER ART TUGADE PARTNERED WITH ROLly Enriquez to capture the overall title in the recent 9th Founders Invitational Golf Cup at the Palmer and Player courses of the exclusive Orchard Golf and Country Club in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

Tugade, playing in the event for the first time, and Enriquez combined for net 87 points at the Palmer course and had a best-ball 52 points at the Player for a 36-hole total of 139 points which was four points better than the Roland Kraut- Richard Thomas Joson combine. Kraut and Joson posted an 87-48-135 and settled for the Class B crown, finishing eight points clear of Roderic Casquejo-Rolando Rebolos.

Stephen King Stehmeier and Seve Roxas-Chua took the low gross plum after scoring 66 at Palmer and 39 at Player for 105. They wound up three better than TJ Benitez-Paul Sonda Jr.

Seven hundred and four pairs took part in this year's Founders Invitational Cup, making it by far the most attended in the history of the annual tourney.

Unfortunately, nobody went home with any of the hole-in-one prizes topped by a Ford Explorer.

The other division winners were Munding del Rosario-Alfredo Pareja in Class A, Art Santos-Guillermo Telmo in Class C, Francis Yan-Emmanuel Victor Weidman in Class D and Secretary Gary Teves-Francis Jimenez in the sponsors division.

Orchard general manager Rene Garrovillo said that the smashing success of the Founders Cup was mainly due to the tremendous support of the membership and sponsors led by Globe Telecoms, Ford Philippines, Golf King, Sta. Elena Properties Inc. and Sta. Lucia Realty and Development Corp. as well as the top management led by president Conrad Benitez and chair Vicente Santos.

Tagaytay B wrests lead

TAGAYTAY "B" STOPPED FIL-WAY TIME LIFE OF Hector Tagaysay, 2.5-1.5, yesterday to grab the solo lead after six rounds in the Pichay Chess Challenge at the Celebrity Sports Plaza in Quezon City.

Truman Hernaez led Tagaytay B's impressive showing with a victory over Samson Lim in Board 3, while Allan Macala turned back Christian Arroyo in Board 4.

In Board 2, Edmundo Gatus settled for a draw with NM Oliver Barbosa, leaving Grandmaster Mark Paragua as the only scorer for Fil-way. Paragua won over 12-year-old chess whiz and Fide Master Master Wesley So in Board 1.

With the win, Tagaytay City "B," skippered by Willie Abalos now leads the pack with 10 points.

In other matches, Armed Forces of the Philippines "B" led by NM Darwin Laylo and NM Rhobel Legaspi got past DAREA Kiosk, 2.5-1.5, to gain solo second with nine points.

Fil-way Time Life remained with eight points in a tie with Gandia of Asia Cargo.

Reigning National Inter-Cities champion Tagaytay City "A," trounced Armed Forces of the Philippines "A," 3-1. GM Joey Antonio Jr., IM Chito Garma and Jerry Areque all won against AFP's IM Ronald Dableo, FM Rico "Kokoy" Salmibagat and Allan Cantonjos, respectively. David Elorta averted a sweep after topping Ilann Perez in Board 4. *Marlon Bernardino*

23rd SEA GAMES

UE HONORS TRIUMPHANT SEAG ATHLETES: The University of the East recently tendered a testimonial dinner for its victorious athletes and coaches in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games. UE chair-CEO P.O. Domingo and executive vice president Carmelita Mateo (second row, fourth and fifth from left) with some of the Games' gold, silver and bronze medalists who are UE students, graduates and/or coaches of UE's athletic teams. UE athletes contributed eight gold, five silver and eight bronze medals to Team Philippines.

Hapee supports sports

THE COMPANY BEHIND HAPEE TOOTHPASTE remains committed to sports development after backing the Philippine team to a haul of 113 gold medals in the recent Southeast Asian Games.

Lamoiyan Corp. president and chief executive Officer Cecilio K. Pedro congratulated the athletes for winning the overall championship for the first time since joining the biennial meet in 1977.

Just recently, Pedro turned over Hapee products, part of the P5 million package which included the appearance of actress Angel Locsin in awareness activities, to Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee (Philsoc) secretary general Steve Hontiveros.

Aside from the SEA Games campaign, Hapee also bankrolled the Philippine team made up of PBA stars to the 2002 Busan Asian Games. Hapee is currently a member of the Philippine Basketball League. Hapee was the official toothpaste of the 23rd SEAG.

SPORTSWATCH

Gorres, Amonsot in Vegas card

TOP-RANKED OPBF SUPER FLY Z "THE DREAM" GORRES AND WBO ASIA-PACIFic super featherweight champion Cezar Amonsot will face separate foes on Feb. 3 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Guilty Promotions, the outfit tasked to promote the event, plans to pit the southpaw Gorres (21-1-1, 12 KOs), who is awaiting a first crack at the OPBF 115-lb title this year, against US-based Mexican Samuel Lopez (17-3, 6 KOs), a dangerous veteran who has been campaigning in the bigger bantamweight category. Lopez, the WBA Fedelatin bantamweight champion, beat highly rated Heriberto Ruiz by majority decision last September. The 31-year-old Mexico City-born fighter is also the former Californian bantamweight champion and is rated by the IBF as No. 11 and by WBA as No. 14. The southpaw Amonsot (13-1-1, 10 KOs), who scored an eighth-round knockout over Indon Victor Mausol last month, is being groomed to fight 21-year-old American Arturo Quintero (14-3, 9 KOs). Gorres and Amonsot are set to depart for the United States on Dec. 27 and then hook up with their manager Tony Aldeguer and trainer Edito Villamor. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Dipolog hosts Junior Tennis Cup

THE PHILAM HOMES TENNIS CLUB HOSTS FOR THE 10TH STRAIGHT YEAR the yearend Milo Junior Tennis Cup and Regional Workshop in Dipolog City on Dec. 26-30 in Quezon City. Featured in the event organized by the Children's Tennis Workshop and supported by Adidas with Philta sanction are the boys' and girls' 18-under, 16-under, 14-under, 12-under and the unisex 10-under divisions. Deadline for registration is at noon tomorrow at the Philam Homes Tennis Club with the draw to follow. Club president Simplicio Hermogenes said the event is as an integral part of the tennis association's sports development program for the youth.

GCAP derbies at San Juan Coliseum

THE GENTLEMEN COCKERS ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (GCAP) WELcomes the 2006 season by staging its first 5-cock derby on Jan. 4 at San Juan Coliseum. Exclusive sponsor is Sagupaan Complexor 3000. According to GCAP founder and *sabong* idol Patrick Antonio, all eight GCAP derbies will be staged at SJC and will be the basis in choosing the Cocker of the Year winner. Aside from the derby circuit, Antonio announced that GCAP will also hold the highly popular Big Event 8-cock derby. With the full backing of SJC management, GCAP is now bigger and stronger with 35 active members. Recently, GCAP stalwart Pol Estrellado of Laguna won as 2005 Stagfighter of the Year.

Special cockfest today at Las Piñas

COCKFIGHTING ACTION SHIFTS TO LAS PIÑAS COLISEUM TONIGHT AS THE special 3-cock derby unfolds with more than 50 fights lined up. Coliseum manager Alex Tobias said a big crowd is expected since this is the only derby scheduled in Metro Manila tonight. Derby hosts are Mayor Nene Aguilar and RC Sayaman. Among the favorites are the entries of Boy de Roca, Pepe and Raymond Burgos, Mandy Garcia of Batangas, Gerry Ramos, Butchoy Olano, Danny Alejo, Yoyoy Danohog, Boy Sauco, Jover Dilao, Cito Zamesa, engineer Wang Yu, Councilor Henry Medina and Mayor Nene Aguilar. Contact 873-1040 and 874-3910. Two more 3-cock derbies are scheduled on Dec. 27 (Baldo Perez and Julius Canumay) and Dec. 29 (Eddie Alejandro). Tobias invites smalltime cockers and breeders to LPC's hack-fight schedule, from Monday to Sunday.

Roligon derby cancelled

ROLIGON MEGA COCKPIT'S NOCHE BUENA 5-COCK DERBY, SCHEDULED ON Dec. 26, 28 and 30, was cancelled yesterday by Roligon management. Majority of the participants who are based in Metro Manila begged off to enjoy the Yuletide season with their families in the provinces, said pit manager Renato Shio. In a related development, Roligon will celebrate its 16th anniversary by staging a super 7-cock derby on Jan. 31, Feb. 2, 4, 7 and 9. A whopping prize of P4 million plus a brand new Toyota Innova await the champions, said host Rolly Ligon. Entry fee is P11,000. Ligon clarified that the Innova is a bonus prize for the fastest win champion and will not be deducted from the guaranteed prize. For reservation of cockhouses, call 851-2275, 833-1638 and 852-9812.

Pichay, Tolentino eyed for NCFP presidency

FORTY-FOUR PLAYERS HAVE THROWN their support behind either Surigao Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay or Tagaytay City Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino as the next president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.

The players, who are all seeing action in the ongoing Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay Chess Challenge at the Celebrity Sports Plaza in Quezon City, have affixed their signatures in a growing campaign to have either Pichay or Tolentino replace outgoing NCFP chief Go Teng Kok.

Go earlier said that he has had enough of the infighting in the NCFP and was willing to give up the presidency to other interested personalities.

On Tuesday, Grandmasters Rogelio "Joey" Antonio and Mark Paragua and International Master Jayson Gonzales aired their support for the candidacy of Pichay.

The campaign gained support from 41 other players yesterday.

Also affixing their signatures were Para Games multiple-gold medalist NM Henry Roger Lopez, IM Chito Garma, FMs Wesley So, Vince Alaan and Rico Salimbagat and National Masters Cesar Caturla, Oliver Barbosa, Emmanuel Senador, Roberto Suelo Jr., Rudy Ibañez and Alex Milagrosa, five-time executive champion Jenny Mayor, NCFP regional coordinator Francisco Cabe Jr., lawyer Frank Sunga, lawyer Virgilio Sevandal, former Asean gold medalist Marc Christian Nazario, Edmundo Gatus, Rodolfo Panopio Jr., Michael Carino, Tyron Alaan, Peter and Samson Lim, Rainier Labay, Edward Sumerdigo, Nelson Villanueva, Ryan Dungca, Ivan Gil Biag, Macapagal Paguital, Raymond Salcedo, Willy Ocampo, Ronald Boy Garcia, Reymon Baon and Marlon Ricafort.

The Philippines was shut out by Vietnam in the race for the gold medal in the recent 23rd SEA Games, but the country somehow avenged that loss in the 3rd Ascan Para Games, where it won seven of the eight gold medals at stake. *Marlon Bernardino*

WOMEN POWER: The top female finishers in last Sunday's Clark National Duathlon Championship with CNDC president Antonio Ng and Jonathan Rosenberg. Rizzo Tangan won the event with Sen. Pia Cayetano and Doray Cortez as runners-up.

People or promise?

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

SOME FRIENDS ARE STILL RIBbing me to this day: "You disapproved of the First Gentleman's gesture to gift the victorious SEA Games athletes a trip to the Hong Kong Disneyland because you were not invited, unlike some of your colleagues."

Well, I keep telling them, I'll never be invited not because the First Gentleman knows I'll decline the invitation anyways (ask PSC boss Butch Ramirez or Philsoc gen-sec Steve Hontiveros) but probably because the Games gods thought I didn't play a major role in the coverage of the SEA Games.

Which, to some extent, was true.

You know, it is that time again in our lives when the one in charge of the overall operations of an undertaking involving the nation's interest—the First Gentleman, who else?—will review his troops and then single out those who have delivered.

For the record, my main job in the recent SEA Games was as head of the Rules Committee of the golf competitions. It was a modest job, yes, but one which I would cherish all my life for the sheer luster of the honor of having been given the rare chance of serving my country without anything in return. My parents, had they been around, would have been proud.

To tell you the truth, I had second thoughts about accepting the job. The main mental block was, "Would it conflict with my job as a journalist?"

It was easy to find the answer: Anything that has to do with serving your country, there should never be any ifs and buts. Go for it, though the heavens fall!

And, yes, I would not have accepted it if not for the trust and confidence reposed upon me by V/Admiral Louie Fernandez and the NGAP leadership headed by Benny Gopez.

In short, I was more of an official in the 23rd SEA Games like Joseph Dumuk—he took time off from his administrative duties at the City of San Fernando, La Union, to become the Games' records custodian—than as chronicler of the Games. Thus, I was myself "covered" by my colleagues and, as proof, the Manila Times' Adrian Flores wrote about one of my rules decisions for the SEA Games Today Newsletter. Boy, was I thrilled! From the coverer to the covered, that was me for a week or so during the Games. Wasn't that nice for a change? Thanks anyways, Adrian, for the kind words.

Not quite incidentally, when the news about Mike Arroyo's Hong Kong Disneyland gift to the Games' Filipino athletes first broke out, I thought, "Oh, my God, I wish the First Gentleman would change his mind."

He didn't. And so, amid loud protests against it due to the huge budget attendant to it, off he and a contingent of about 300 flew to Hong Kong.

What does that make of the First Gentleman?

A man of his word? One who has palabra de honor? He made a promise and so, he must keep it?

The true mark of a good, if not wise, man is when he knows how to bend if only to heed that which is headed for the right direction. To have changed one's mind for the benefit of the many would be as heroic an act as accepting one's mistake unconditionally. Someone said that what makes a nation great is not primarily its great men, but the stature of its innumerable mediocre ones.

Either Mike Arroyo is a great man or mediocre.

Listen to Francis Bacon: "To worship the people is to be worshipped."

To worship the people or your promise, that is the question.

Mike Arroyo's answer will determine if he's great or mediocre.

***

FASTBREAK. My condolence goes to Ka Tino and Norman Tugot for the demise of Mrs. Tino Tugot recently. Also, I offer my prayers for the eternal repose of the soul of the NBI chief, Gen. Reynaldo "Wayks" Wycoco. Wayks was my *kumpadre*, whose kindness, humility and gentlemanly ways were the pillars on which his military and government service had been anchored on.

***

Send comments to menju@pldtdst.net

Booters nabbed for match-fixing

HANOI, VIETNAM—POLICE ARRESTED two members of Vietnam's national soccer team for match-fixing during the Southeast Asian Games, state media reported Wednesday.

Vietnam striker Pham Van Quyen and midfielder Le Quoc Vuong were taken into police custody Tuesday and formally charged with gambling and organizing gambling, Thanh Nien newspaper reported. They were being held in a detention center outside Hanoi.

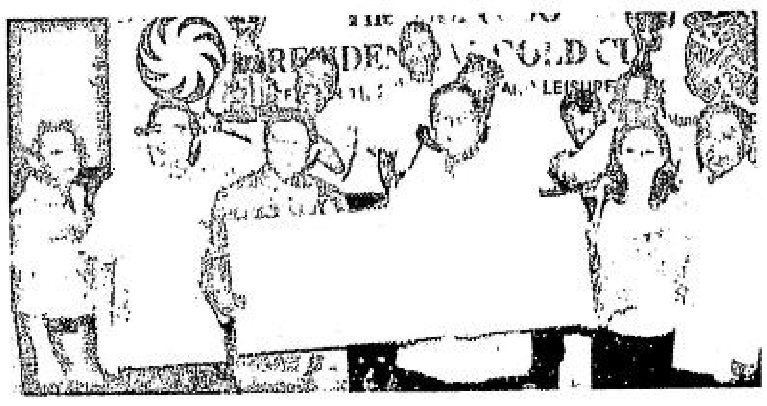
At least five members of the Vietnam team are under suspicion of fixing games against Myanmar and Malaysia during this month's SEA Games in the Philippines in return for tens of thousands of US dollars.

Vietnam defeated Burma, 1-0, and advanced to the semifinal round to beat Malaysia, 2-1. However, it lost 3-0 in the championship match to regional powerhouse Thailand.

The players' arrest is the latest embarrassment for the country's scandal-plagued soccer community, which has seen a string of high-profile arrests in connection with bribery and gambling.

SEA Games organizers in the Philippines said they were disappointed by the revelations but pleased that Vietnam had brought the matter under investigation.

"I'm saddened by the fact that there are these kind of athletes that competed in the SEA Games, but at the same time I'm glad the Vietnamese officials were able to discover and bring this matter to the attention of the police," Philippine Olympic Committee chair Robert Aventajado told The Associated Press in Manila. *AP*



GOLD CUP. Sweepstakes Chair Sergio Valencia (holding check) joins 2005 PCSO Presidential Gold Cup winner Speed Advantage trainer Jose Fernandez, owner-representative Mario de la Paz and jockey Fernando Raquel Jr.

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SPORTS

BIG GAMES FROM BIG NAMES

Kobe fires 62; Shaq fuels Heat

O'NEAL: Made first eight shots. AP

LOS ANGELES—THEY ALL HAD BIG NIGHTS. Shaquille O'Neal couldn't be contained. Vince Carter was all-around brilliant. Even rookie Andrew Bogut shone, coming through in the nick of time.

None of them, though, came close to Kobe Bryant.

Bryant poured in a career high 62 points to power the Los Angeles Lakers to a 112-90 win over the Dallas Mavericks on Tuesday at the Staples Center.

Bryant's spectacular performance included 18-of-31 shooting from the floor and 22-of-25 from the free throw line in just 33 minutes of work guiding the surging Lakers to their eighth win in 10 games.

The night began modestly for the 27-year-old all-star, scoring 15 points in the opening quarter and adding 17 in the second before exploding for a franchise record 30 in the third quarter behind a dazzling display of shotmaking.

Bryant's performance, however, fell just shy of the NBA single quarter points record of 33 set by George Gervin in 1978.

The 62 points eclipsed Bryant's previous career single game high of 56 set in 2002 against Memphis and are the most by a member of the Lakes since Shaquille O'Neal hit for 61 against the Los Angeles Clippers in 2000.

In Milwaukee, Andrew Bogut drained a fadeaway jump shot as time ran off the clock to earn the Bucks a 109-107 overtime win over the San Antonio Spurs.

Bogut, the number one pick in this year's draft, finished the night with 19 points and nine rebounds while Maurice Williams added a team best 28 points.

Tim Duncan had a game high 34 points and pulled down 13 rebounds in a losing cause while Tony Parker had 22 points and dished out 11 assists as the NBA champions lost two straight for the first time this season.

In Miami, Shaquille O'Neal scored 28 points and pulled down 10 rebounds to lead the Heat to a 111-92 victory over the Atlanta Hawks, giving Pat Riley his first home win since taking over as coach.

O'Neal hit his first eight shots and finished 13-of-15 from the floor in 24 minutes of work as the Heat rolled to their fifth win in six games, improving to 4-1 under Riley, who took over as coach from Stan Van Gundy last week.

With O'Neal firing on all cylinders, the Heat stormed to a 21-9 first quarter lead and were in command 56-35 at the intermission.

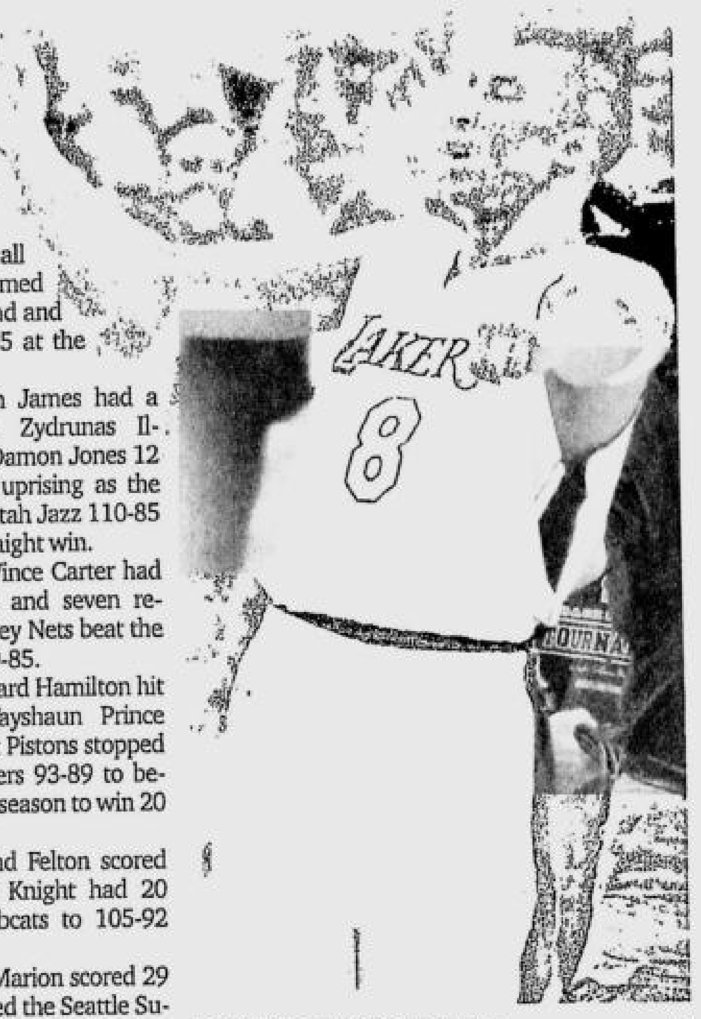
In Cleveland, LeBron James had a game-high 25 points, Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 18 and Damon Jones 12 to key a third quarter uprising as the Cavaliers dumped the Utah Jazz 110-85 to register their third straight win.

In East Rutherford, Vince Carter had 35 points, nine assists and seven rebounds as the New Jersey Nets beat the Los Angeles Clippers, 99-85.

In Auburn Hills, Richard Hamilton hit for 23 points and Tayshaun Prince added 21 as the Detroit Pistons stopped the Portland Trail Blazers 93-89 to become the first team this season to win 20 games.

In Chicago, Raymond Felton scored 21 points and Brevin Knight had 20 sparking Charlotte Bobcats to 105-92 win over the Bulls.

In Phoenix, Shawn Marion scored 29 points as the Suns routed the Seattle SuperSonics 111-83. *Reuters*



BRYANT: In just 33 minutes. AP

Toe surgery for Yao

HOUSTON—Houston center Yao Ming is expected to miss several NBA games after undergoing surgery on Monday on his infected left big toe. Yao, who is averaging 19.9 points and nine boards, flew from Los Angeles to Houston on Sunday, missing the Rockets' game against the Lakers. Yao's toe is infected with osteomyelitis, a common inflammation of the bone caused by bacteria, the Rockets said. Before Sunday, the 25-year-old Chinese center had missed only two games in his first three NBA seasons. *AP*

Teen pro signs first sponsor

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA—TEENAGER Morgan Pressel signed a multi-year sponsorship deal with Callaway Golf Company on Tuesday, one day after she was granted an exemption to compete full time on the LPGA Tour.

The US Amateur champion, who also made her mark among the pros in 2005, will endorse Callaway Golf woods, irons, wedges, golf balls and licensed Callaway Golf footwear.

The 17-year-old will use a Callaway Golf bag and wear the company's logo on her visor.

"I am really proud to be associated with Callaway Golf," said Pressel, who already was using some of the firm's equipment before turning pro last month.

Pressel is sure to be in the spotlight when the LPGA Tour tees off in February.

On Monday LPGA commissioner Carolyn Bivens granted her an exemption from the tour's minimum age requirement which stipulates full-time members must be 18 years old.

Pressel originally was told that she could not play as a tour member until her 18th birthday May 23.

But an impressive performance at qualifying school helped her convince Bivens to grant the exception.

She wasn't the first to receive such a consideration, which was also granted to South Korean Aree Song in 2004 by then commissioner Ty Votaw. *AFP*

Red Sox lose star to Yankees

BOSTON—BOSTON RED SOX CENTER fielder Johnny Damon, who helped the team capture its first World Series title in 86 years in 2004, will move to the New York Yankees, the team's archrival, the Boston Globe reported on Tuesday.

The newspaper reported that Damon, one of Boston's most popular players, will receive $52 million for a four-year contract.

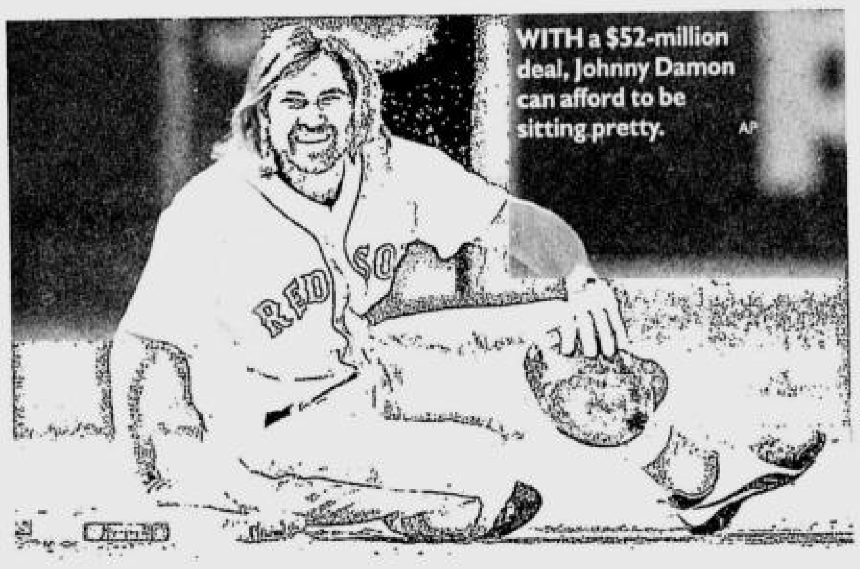
The Globe said Damon confirmed his plans to move to a Boston television station. On its Web site, the Globe quoted Damon as saying that the Yankees pursued him "aggressively."

For the Yankees the speedy 32-year-old Damon will replace Bernie Williams, whose defensive skills have declined in recent years.

Damon, who will be a leadoff hitter in New York, batted .316 with 197 hits and 117 runs scored for the Red Sox last season.

A two-time All-Star, Damon has a career .290 batting average over his 11 major league seasons.

The deal will be sealed after Damon passes a physical exam. *Reuters*



WITH a $52-million deal, Johnny Damon can afford to be sitting pretty. AP

Hingis sets comeback

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—FORMER WOMen's tennis world No.1 Martina Hingis will play the Sydney International tournament next month, organizers said Wednesday.

Hingis, 25, who announced last month she was coming out of a four-year retirement forced by injuries, also will play a WTA tournament on Australia's Gold Coast before the Sydney tournament.

"We are thrilled to be in a position to welcome Martina back to Sydney and provide her a wild card for the Medibank (Sydney) International," said tournament director Craig Watson.

Hingis is a three-time winner of the event. She won five Grand Slam singles titles, and was only 16 1/2 when she became No. 1 in March 1997. She hopes to receive a wild card into the Australian Open at Melbourne. *AP*

Golf changes: A shorter season, more travel

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA—TIGER Woods and Phil Mickelson were the most vocal about wanting a shorter season on the US PGA Tour, although their motives didn't appear to be anything alike.

Mickelson virtually disappeared after the Presidents Cup in September. He did play two official events, although not many realized he was at San Francisco (tied for 29th), and he didn't stay long in Las Vegas (missed cut). Mickelson also played the PGA Grand Slam of Golf in Hawaii, but not before offending the sponsors by not showing up for the pro-am.

Woods' busiest time of the year came after the year ended.

From the Tour Championship in Atlanta, he went to Shanghai to Japan to Hawaii to Palm Springs before ending his season at his Target World Challenge this month. Woods then said he needed an offseason, so he chose to take time off during the regular season by skipping the 2006 season-opener in Kapalua, Hawaii next month.

The PGA Tour often boasts that its players are independent contractors, which makes the need for a shorter season somewhat curious. Because if that's the case—and using Woods and Mickelson as examples—then these independent contractors can make their season as long or as short as they want.

But maybe this isn't about the players. Tour commissioner Tim Finchem said in August that change was necessary to keep golf compelling in a saturated sports market, and the solution was to create a blockbuster finish. Whether that works remains to be seen; most casual fans care about only four tournaments each year, anyway.

If there is something good that comes out of a shorter season, the hope is that more Americans will use the extra time to see the world.

The US PGA Tour is the biggest and best, if not the richest. Television now brings the stars to living rooms in faraway outposts. Still, there is no greater stimulus for growth than when starved fans overseas can watch players in person.

"There have been very few years when I haven't gone out of the country to play an event or two," said Jim Furyk, who usually heads to South Africa.

The World Golf Championships were not the answer. Even in its infancy, a dozen top Americans did not go to Spain in 2000 for the American Express Championship, prompting Australian Stuart Appleby to needle the Yankees with this classic line: "They're like a bag of prawns on a hot Sunday. They don't travel well."

One of the letters Michael Campbell received after winning the US Open—the first player from New Zealand since Bob Charles in 1963 to win a major—came from Jack Nicklaus.

"He said to me, 'Michael, from now on you have responsibilities to promote this game around the world.' And that's what I'm doing," Campbell said.

Woods gets plenty of respect for his game, but also for his willingness to travel.

"I'm sure the world golf population would like to see more guys travel," Denmark's Thomas Bjorn said. "But as long as one guy travels, that's all we need. Golf around the world is Tiger Woods." *AP*

CHAMPS: Members of the Immaculate Conception Academy Greenhills High School basketball team receive their trophy after winning the Filipino-Chinese Amateur Athletic League title. They also topped the Women's Basketball League Championships on Dec. 3.

Disabled athlete gives birth two days after winning 'Para' gold

BANGKOK, THAILAND—A DISABLED Thai athlete gave birth to a baby girl two days after winning a gold medal in the discus event at the ASEAN ParaGames in Manila, officials said Wednesday.

Wanna Ladee, 22, said she didn't tell anyone about her pregnancy because she was in desperate need of money for her newborn.

Wanna, whose right leg is crippled, complained to sports officials last Monday of stomach pains and was rushed to a hospital in Manila where she delivered a healthy child, said Jaturaporn na Nakorn, deputy director of the Sports Authority of Thailand.

"I was stunned and speechless when I was informed by the Thai sports staff that our athlete gave birth to a child only two days after she won the gold medal," Jaturaporn told reporters.

Wanna will receive a 50,000 baht ($1,250) reward for winning a gold medal in the discus as well as a bronze in the shot put event, Jaturaporn said.

Wanna was among 164 Thai athletes taking part in the Dec. 14-20 games for disabled that followed the Southeast Asian Games in the Philippine capital. More than 1,000 disabled athletes from 11 countries participated in the ParaGames.

"I did not tell anyone about my pregnancy because I needed the reward money for my coming child," Wanna told a Thai radio station interviewing her at the hospital.

The Sports Authority of Thailand is to investigate how officials allowed the eight-month pregnant woman to take part in the games and also blamed the host country for not conducting dope tests from her urine which would have detected her condition. *AP*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2005
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WOODY ALLEN

‘Mediocre’ maker of ‘miserable’ movies

LONDON—IN HIS TRADEmark gloomy manner, US cinema legend Woody Allen said Sunday he is a “mediocre” director of “miserable work.”

“I’ve disappointed myself most of the time,” the New Yorker told BBC television, rejecting claims he is a film artist.

In London for the world premiere of his new movie, “Match Point,” set in the British capital, Allen said: “People think I’m an intellectual because I wear glasses and they think I’m an artist because my films lose money.”

Allen’s movies have often been better received in Europe than in America but he said he was grateful for any US acclaim as it would have overlooked his “glaring faults and miserable work.”

“I’m one of the smallest moneymaking Academy Award winners in history,” the 70-year-old said, referring to his Oscars for “Annie Hall” in 1977 and “Hannah and Her Sisters” in 1986.

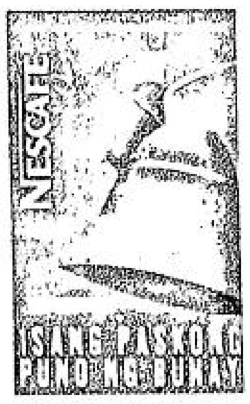
“My relationship with the American audience is exactly the same as it has always been: They never came to see my films, and they don’t come now. I’ve often said that the only thing standing between me and greatness is me,” he mused.

Summing up his giant filmography as “mediocre,” Allen said “Match Point,” “Husbands and Wives” (1992) and “The Purple Rose of Cairo” (1985) were “three films of mine that are good films. Those are good films by anybody’s standards.”

Allen claimed he had led a pretty dull, middle-class life. “I was married a couple of times. I’m not a dope addict, I don’t drink. I’m not really a neurotic,” he said.

He touched on his love of playing the clarinet: “I’m a terrible clarinet player. But I play with my heart. I don’t have a great ear for music.”

He said it thrilled and amazed him that people turn up to watch his band. *AFP*



NESCAFE
ISANG PASKO NG PUNO NG BUHAY

31st METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival opens on Dec. 25.)

Shake, Rattle and Roll 2K5

A HORROR TRILOGY, “SRR 2K5” BOASTS of three directors, three scare stories bolstered by special effects and three all-star casts.

“Poso” stars Ai-Ai Delas Alas, Gloria Romero, Yasmien Kurdi, Rainier Castillo, Marco Alcaraz, Biboy Ramirez, Jenine Desiderio. Uro Dela Cruz directs this tale of an eccentric millionaire (Romero) who hires a fake seer (Delas Alas) to communicate with her dead grandson (Alcaraz) whom, she claims, has been haunting a “poso.” With Delas Alas, viewers can expect a comic twist.

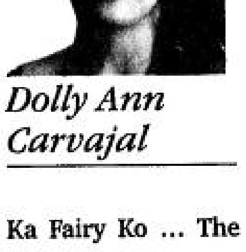
“Aquarium” stars Ogie Alcasid and Ara Mina as husband and wife who have to deal with an evil creature dwelling in an old fish tank and terrorizing their son (Paul Salas). Working with a limited budget, award-winning director Rico Ilarde manages to have the aquarium explode and flood the couple’s room, a scene calculated to elicit screams from an audience who wants to be scared.

“Lihim” is Mark Anthony Fernandez’s comeback project after spending time in drug rehab to conquer his personal demons. In this segment directed by Richard Sommes, Fernandez conquers *aswangs* in a village to save himself and his wife (Tanya Garcia). Also stars Elizabeth Oropesa, Noni Buencamino and Ronnie Lazaro.

Regal Entertainment’s Lily Monteverde is banking on this longest-running franchise for a horror movie in the annual fest. “Shake, Rattle” has been rolling onscreen for almost two decades. Her son Dondon, who has also started to produce movies, says “SRR 2K5” does not lag behind the battle of special effects in this year’s race. *Nini Valera*

A little chat with ‘Bosing’

DOLLY WOOD



Dolly Ann Carvajal

I REMEMBER SEEING VIC SOTTO EVERY SO often at **Dina Bonnevie**’s place when he was still courting her. He has always struck me as a modern knight in shining armor. When you’re with him, you feel like everything is taken care of. This charisma that he exudes with women is evident in his movies. No wonder Vic is the reigning Metro Manila Film Film Festival box-office champ. All his past entries were certified top grossers. This year, he returns via “Enteng Kabisote ... The Legend Continues.”

Don’t you feel pressured to duplicate or surpass the box office success of “Enteng Kabisote (Okay Ka Fairy Ko ... The Legend)”?

Not at all. What matters is that people are entertained and they get their money’s worth. I hope all the entries make money.

What’s your edge over the two other fantasy film entries (“Exodus” and “Mulawin”)?

Theirs is serious stuff. Enteng is pure comedy. It’s Christmas, so *dapat* happy. Pero di kami patatalo sa special effects.

You’re teamed up with Kristine Hermosa for the second time. You’re known to be a ladies’ man ...

Ayaw ni Diether Ocampo *ng ganyan*! Seriously, she’s a joy to work with. Too bad, age bracket *siya ni* Oyo Boy (laughs)!

Speaking of Oyo Boy (who plays Benok in the film), do you give him advice regarding relationships?

Hands off ako when it comes to my kids’ love life. I don’t give unsolicited advice. But I’m al-

A LITTLE/ A2-4

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1 KING KONG • THX
1:40 5:20 9:00

2 KING KONG
2:10 5:50 8:30

3 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

4 KING KONG
12:40 4:20 8:00

5 KING KONG
11:00 2:40 6:20 10:00

6 KING KONG
12:10 3:50

7 IN HER SHOES
1:35 4:20 7:05 9:50

8 BEUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

9 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50

10 KISNA 12:40 3:50
BARSAAT 7:05 9:50

ERMITA 536-7900 to 12

1 KING KONG 1:50 5:20 8:50

2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
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6 KING KONG
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7 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

METRO EAST

1 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

2 KING KONG
10:25 2:10 5:50 9:40

3 KING KONG
2:10 5:55 9:40

4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

5 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
1:00 3:40 6:20 9:00

6 KING KONG
5:15 9:00

7 KING KONG
1:30 5:15 9:00

8 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00

NOVALICHES

1 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
2 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 THE FOG
6 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview

CITISQUARE MALABON

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
4 BEUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview

Kisna
THE WARRIOR POET

a motion picture by: *Subhash Ghai*
& w/ special appearance of *Sushmita Sen*

A young Indian, Kisna, defies his family and brethren and shields a British girl Catherine from an enraged mob of nationalists. Catherine happens to be the young daughter of a ruthless British Deputy Commissioner. Kisna decides to escort Catherine to the British High Commission in New Delhi, but before that he has to face opposition from his uncle, elder brother Shankar and a scheming, lusty and powerhungry prince, Raghuraj. During this journey, Kisna and Catherine's friendship blossoms into love, thereby complicating Kisna's life further. His relations with the girl he is engaged to, Laxmi are strained in the process.

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2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 IN HER SHOES
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
5 KING KONG

LIPA

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET OF FIRE
4 THE FOG

DASMARINAS

1 KING KONG
2 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 THE FOG

ANGELES

1 KING KONG
2 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

IMUS

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 IN HER SHOES
4 THE FOG

STARMILLS

1 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG

BACOLOD

1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
5 CHICKEN LITTLE
6 THE MYTH

ILOILO

1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 THE MYTH
5 KING KONG

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At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows December 23 - 25, 30, 2005 Christmas Fireworks Display December 16 - 18, 23, 25, 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM	Acoustic Christmas Serenade feat. Chedi December 23, 2005 - 6 PM Blims / Automatic Center Exhibit Dec. 19 to 31, 2005	2005 Novellino - Manila Philharmonic Orchestra Concert Tour December 21, 2005

AYALA GREENBELT

Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows
December 23 - 25, 30, 2005
Christmas Fireworks Display
December 23, 25, 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM

GREENBELT 1 Onstage AYALA CENTER

REPERTORY PHILIPPINES presents
MAN OF LA MANCHA - The Musical
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AYALA CINEMAS

AYALA CINEMAS THX

Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 THE FAMILY STONE	2 KINGKONG	3 KINGKONG	4 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 KINGKONG	2 KINGKONG	3 THX KINGKONG 1:55, 5:35, 9:15 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 KISS KISS BANG BANG	5 CHICKEN LITTLE	6 KINGKONG	7 IN HER SHOES
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 THE FAMILY STONE 12:55, 3:20, 5:45, 8:10	2 KINGKONG 1:40, 5:20, 9:00		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX KINGKONG 1:00, 4:45, 8:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX KINGKONG 2:00, 5:45, 9:30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 THE FAMILY STONE 1:40, 4:05, 6:30, 8:55, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 KINGKONG 3:00, 6:45, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX KINGKONG	2 THE FAMILY STONE		
	3 BEAUTIFUL BOXER	4 KINGKONG	5 KINGKONG	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 KINGKONG	2 KINGKONG	3 KINGKONG	4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

"WICKEDLY FUNNY."

- GARY THOMPSON, PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

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① King Kong
② Beautiful Boxer
③ King Kong
④ The Family Stone
⑤ King Kong

EVENTS! EVENTS!

MARKET!
MARKET!
Bonifacio Global City
The fun is in the finds
Christmas Shopping Bag

1. Promo period is from Dec. 9 to 31, 2005.
2. For every P500 single or accumulated receipt purchase dated on the same day in any regular retail store, food choices, and Metro Department Store and Supermarket, shoppers will get 1 Christmas Shopping Bag.
3. A maximum of 4 shopping bags will be given to shoppers presenting single or accumulated receipts amounting to P2001 and over.
4. Shoppers will present their receipt to the Customer Service booth to redeem their Market! Market! shopping bag.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-580, Series of 2005

Less stress on 'Starstruck,' please

LAST DEC. 11 THE "STARSTRUCK 3" TALENT search on Channel 7 pared down its young contenders from all over the country to its 14 finalists.

To do this, it first divided the surviving contestants into two groups. It turned out that one group was "safe," while the second group included the contestants who would be eliminated toward the end of the telecast.

Before the final survivors were announced, however, each contestant was evaluated by the show's staffers, especially when it came to their negative aspects.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

As these traits were being ticked off, we got a clearer idea of what the show felt were significant factors that affect a new talent's successful career prospects in show biz—or, at the very least, on the TV talent search.

"You don't *look* like a teen star." "We hear you're *rebelde*." "Your dad isn't convinced that you should be in show biz, so he may not back you up." "You're too *tisay*."

"You aren't sure you've made the right decision." "You're good-looking, but you have little else going for you." "You aren't a Total Performer." "You have a bad temper." "You're too shy."

Other young talents who want to make it in entertainment can take their cue from those negative notes, learn from them, and opt to do or be the opposite, at least in some of those aspects.

As for the final 14 who were named at the end of last Sunday's telecast, it was instructive to observe that, instead of feeling ecstatic, as expected, many of them were highly stressed, in tears, looked depressed, etc.

Were they feeling sad because some of their colleagues didn't make it? Perhaps. But, it could also be that the entire suspenseful "revelation" process was simply too stressful for their young psyches to take.

That's why we keep urging the people behind talent searches like this to always remember that they're dealing with *young* people, so they shouldn't treat them like hard-boiled adults and put them through the psychological wringer, just to generate more "drama" and competition in the televised tilt.

Exercise better judgement, be more sensitive and responsible, and have a heart—please.

The tilt's jurors should lead the way in this regard. Enough of the snide, bitchy, "quotable" comments just to make the show more "interesting." Pick somebody your own size—and age!

It also isn't cricket to reveal to the viewing public, as one recent telecast did, that a teen contestant once tried to commit suicide. This opens the young person to all sorts of misinterpretations and public criticism, and no youth should be exposed to such stressful reactions.

Talent searches should have child psychologists as consultants, because they could warn program personnel of negative elements *before* the young contestants are adversely affected.

We know that the show is employing the stressful competitive approach to make the tilt more "exciting"—but genuine excitement can be generated in healthier and more creative ways.

Now that the "Starstruck" finalists have been named, we trust that the show will handle them in a more sensitive way, as their young sensibilities require.

If the show persists in treating them roughly, parents, educators and other concerned viewers should convince the "adults" involved in the program to behave more responsibly.

Songwriting competition

BRITISH Council Philippines and the Office of the Ombudsman are launching an anti-corruption campaign anchored on a Songwriting Competition with the theme, "building a culture of integrity and excellence."

Preliminary screening will be based on melody, comparison, originality and lyrics. The 10 entries receiving the highest aggregate scores shall move into the finals. The 10 songs will be recorded and distributed to radio stations for airplay beginning April 2, 2006.

Judging criteria for the finals on May 12 will be according to music and melody (40 percent), substance and lyrics (40 percent) and performance (20 percent). For details, log on to www.britishcouncil.org.ph or call 914-1011.

All-time hits

VICOR Music has released box-set collections of the all-time hits of **Martin Nievera** and **Rey Valera**—"The Discography" and "Walang Kapalit," respectively. The Nievera collection includes "Be My Lady," "Pain," "Say That You Love Me" and "One Heart" (Duet with **Pops Fernandez**). Valera's hits include "Sinasamba Kita," "Kamusta Ka," "Pangako," "Tayong Dalawa," "Lihim," "Malayo Pa ang Umaga" and "Maging Sino Ka Man."

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For inquiries, call:
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MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	KINGKONG	2:45, 6:35	PG-13
2	KINGKONG	11:30, 3:20	PG-13
3	KINGKONG	12:40, 4:30	PG-13
4	KINGKONG	1:50, 5:40	PG-13

POWER PLANT CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

CHICKEN LITTLE GP 1:00,3:00,5:00,7:00,9:00	KING KONG PG13 2:25,5:55,9:25	FAMILY STONE PG13 12:30,2:55,5:20, 7:45,10:10
KING KONG PG13 1:00,4:30,8:00	KING KONG PG13 12:20,3:50,7:20	KING KONG PG13 3:10,6:40,10:10

SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL: 898-1440-41.

SHANG CINEPLEX
① KING KONG
MTRCB. PG-13
12.30, 4:15, 8.00 PM
② KING KONG
MTRCB. PG-13
1:30, 5.15, 9.00 PM
③ FAMILY STONE
MTRCB. PG-13
12.00, 2.30, 5.00, 7:30,10:00
④ KING KONG
MTRBC.PG-13
2.30, 6.15, 10.00 PM
PREMIERE THEATRE KING KONG
MTRCB PG-13 2:00 5:45 9:30 PM
Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice
Catch the Cineplex Special
Be serenaded by the world-renowned San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra and San Miguel Master Chorale in a one-of-a-kind Christmas Music Festival at Shangri-La Plaza's Grand Atrium, Level 2, on Friday, December 23, 7 p.m.
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Shangri-La Plaza

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CINEMA 2 KING KONG PG13 12:35, 4:15, 7:55
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
PROMENADE
GREENHILLS
...a dinetertainment for all!
NOW SHOWING
CINEMA 3 FAMILY STONE PG13 10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
CINEMA 4 KING KONG PG13 10:50, 2:30, 6:10, 9:50
CINEMA 5 KING KONG PG13 11:25, 3:05, 6:45, 10:25
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.
MUSIC MUSEUM
January 27, 2005 JED MADELA 9PM
February 3 & 4 NINA & NYOY 9PM
FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL: 721-6726 OR 721-0635

Araneta Center Leisure Guide
CINEMA SCHEDULES
Gateway CINEPLEX 10
LEVEL 4, GATEWAY MALL
ONLY P99 ADMISSION
P120 RESERVED SEATS
P140 HARRY POTTER
P150 KING KONG
GLOBE PLATINUM P249 / P299
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX
FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CALL TICKETNET AT 911-5555

KING KONG 12:00 / 2:25 / 3:35 / 6:00 / 7:10 / 9:35
FAMILY STONE 1:30 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:30
BEAUTIFUL BOXER 1:30 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:30
JUST LIKE HEAVEN 12:40 / 2:50 / 5:00 / 7:10 / 9:20
...MAXIMO OLIVEROS 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30
GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
KING KONG 1:50 / 5:25 / 9:00
HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET 12:30/ 3:30 / 6:30 / 9:30
THE FOG 12:20 / 2:30 / 4:40
IN HER SHOES 6:50 / 9:30
CHICKEN LITTLE 12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30
MERRY CHRISTMAS 6:40 / 9:30

ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ KING KONG 12:50 / 4:25 / 8:00
❷ BEAUTIFUL BOXER 12:10 / 2:50 / 5:30 / 8:10
❸ IN HER SHOES 12:30 / 3:10 / 5:50 / 8:30
❹ HARI NG SABLAY 12:30 / 3:00 / 5:30 / 8:00
❺ THE MYTH 12:45 / 3:15 / 5:45 / 8:20
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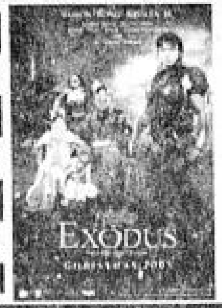
IN THEATERS WORLDWIDE DECEMBER 14

MAKING IT BIG ON ITS 2ND WEEK
movietime SCHEDULE AND EVENTS



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The 31st Metro Manila Film Festival-Philippines 2005
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Props and costumes used in EXODUS are now on display at the cinema lobby of SM Megamall

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2 MAKING GIRL 11:15FS/11:35MF 02:45LFS/03:10LMF/06:20END
MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG 08:00LFS/08:30LMF/11:40END
CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 KING KONG 01:20FS/01:40MF/05:05 08:15LFS/08:30LMF/11:35END
2 KING KONG 11:00FS/11:15MF/02:40/06:05 09:13LFS/09:30LMF/12:35END
3 KING KONG 10:35FS/10:45MF/02:10/05:35 08:43LFS/09:00LMF/12:05END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
KING KONG
2 MERRY CHRISTMAS
3 KING KONG
4 THE FOG
5 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
6 THE FAMILY STONE
7 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
9 KING KONG
10 KING KONG
11 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
12 THE MAN

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 MERRY CHRISTMAS
8 CHICKEN LITTLE
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 THE FOG

SM CITY BICUTAN
KING KONG
FAMILY TONE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
KING KONG

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
KING KONG
KING KONG
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
FAMILY STONE
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
KING KONG
KING KONG
5 HARI NG SABLAY
THE FOG
KING KONG
KING KONG
HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
CHICKEN LITTLE
12 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
KING KONG
FAMILY STONE
KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
THE MAN
8 THE FOG
9 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
10 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT NOW OPEN
1 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 FAMILY STONE
4 MERRY CHRISTMAS
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 THE FOG
KING KONG
8 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS

SM CITY MANILA
1 FAMILY STONE
2 KING KONG
KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 THE FOG
6 KING KONG
BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
9 KING KONG
10 KING KONG
11 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
12 THE MAN

SM SAN LAZARO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
6 THE FOG

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
KING KONG
KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIR
5 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
HARI NG SABLAY

SM CITY BAGUIO
KING KONG
HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
THE FOG
4 KING KONG

SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY BACOOR
EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 FAMILY STONE
8 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 KING KONG
2 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG

SM CITY DASMARIÑAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG

SM CITY LUCENA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
THE MYTH

SM CITY BATANGAS
KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 THE FOG
6 THE MYTH
KING KONG
8 KING KONG

SM CITY ILOILO
JUST LIKE HEAVEN
RESERVED
KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
THE FOG
RESERVED
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS

SM CITY DAVAO
KING KONG
2 KING KONG
ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 THE FOG
5 KING KONG
KING KONG

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
KING KONG
3 THE MYTH
4 KING KONG

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2 (DOLBY) KING KONG PG13
3 (DOLBY) FAMILY STONE PG13
4 (DOLBY) KING KONG PG13
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) KING KONG PG13

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2 (SDDS) KING KONG
3 (DTS) KING KONG
4 GOLD (DTS) CHICKEN LITTLE
5 GOLD (DOLBY) KING KONG
6 GOLD (SDDS) KING KONG
7 GOLD (DOLBY) THE FOG
8 (DOLBY STEREO) EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
9 (DOLBY STEREO) HARRY POTTER-4
10 FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)

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2 (DOLBY) KING KONG
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 (DOLBY) KING KONG

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1 MY LITTLE BRIDE
2 (DTS) KING KONG
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 (DOLBY) KING KONG
3 (DTS) KING KONG
4 MY LITTLE BRIDE

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
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2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 GHOST INSIDE
2 IN HER SHOES
3 (DOLBY) THE MYTH
4 (DTS) THE FOG

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG

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(Gapan)
1 GRAND OPENING DEC. 16, KING KONG
2 CINEMA 2 OPENS ON DEC. 25, 2005 "EXODUS" & ENTENG KABISOTE

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Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)

Blue Wave MARQUINTON
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 (DOLBY) CHICKEN LITTLE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)

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2 KING KONG
3 BEAUTIFUL BOXER (SNEAK PREVIEW)
4 FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)
5 LOLLIPOP & ROSES

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3 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) KING KONG
5 KING KONG

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Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 THE MYTH
4 RESERVED

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1 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
2 CHICKEN LITTLE
3 THE MYTH

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504286, 5433994
1 MASAHISTA
2 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
3 WEREWOLF GONGERSNAPS-2
4 KING KONG

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) KING KONG
2 MY LITTLE BRIDE
3 (DTS EX) KING KONG
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 ABNORMAL BEAUTY
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 (DTS) KING KONG

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 HARI NG SABLAY
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 (DTS) KING KONG

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 THE MYTH
2 MY LITTLE BRIDE

NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan, Telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 MY LITTLE BRIDE

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena City) tel. 6605271
1 THE MYTH
2 KING KONG
3
4

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 IN HER SHOES
2 THE MYTH

Lianas Cinema
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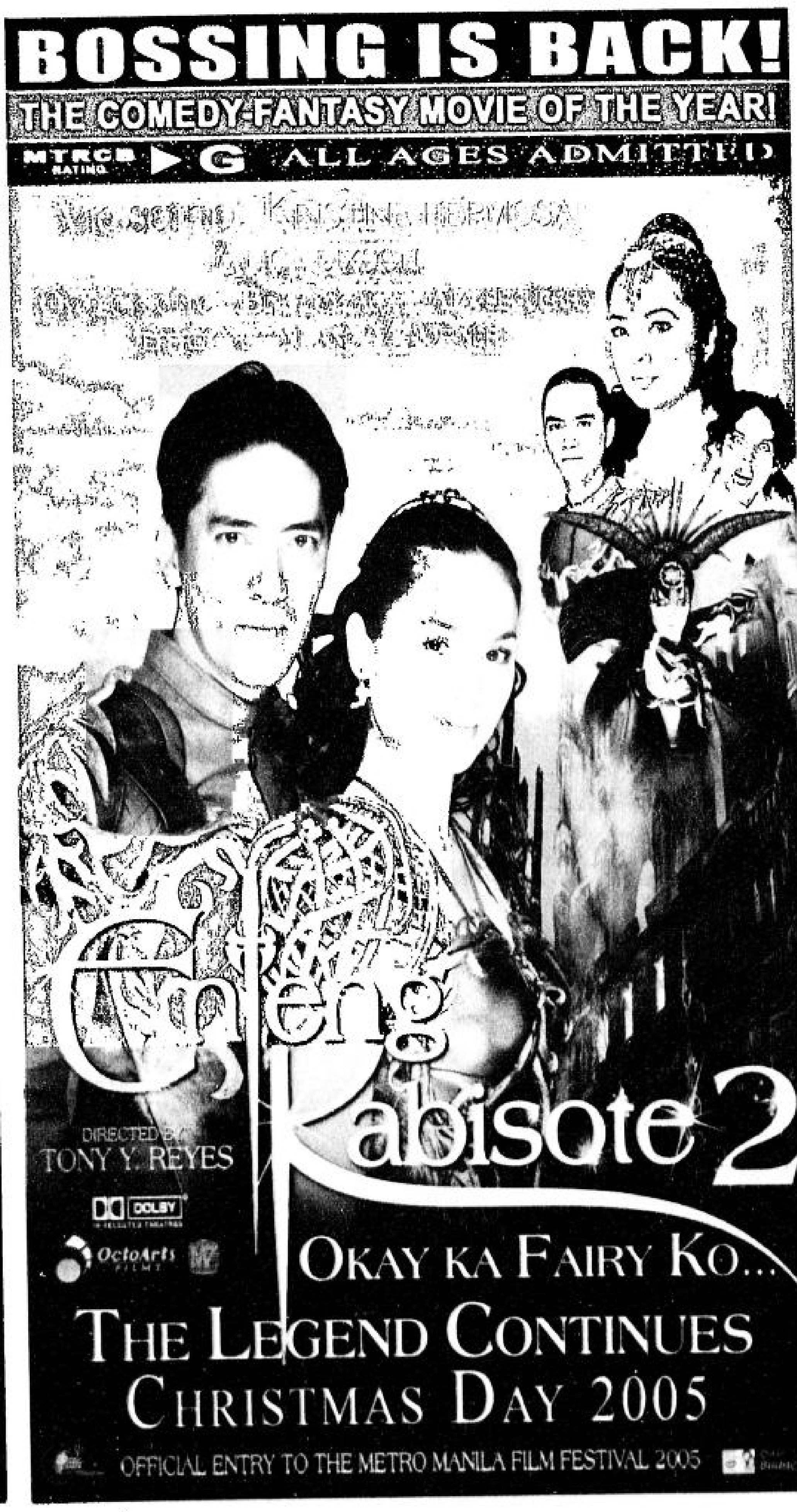
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CHRISTMAS DAY 2005
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2005

Mel's show celebrates Joey's life

FOR ITS THIRD anniversary presentation, GMA 7's "Magpakailanman," hosted by Mel Tiangco, dramatizes the life story of Joey de Leon.

Unlike the show's usual dramatic fare, the colorful story of one of the pillars of Philippine comedy is vaunted to make tonight's episode "extra special."

The episode is also the series' Christmas presentation.

DID YOU KNOW...

NAOMI WATTS says her screen-ripping screams as Ann Darrow in "King Kong" are movie lore, just as much as the plane-swatting ape. "You squeal when there's a mouse but when there's something really scary, you [sort of] swallow your voice." *AP*

VIC Sotto and Kristine Hermosa

A little chat with Enteng

From page A2-0

ways around for them. *Mas guapo si* Oyo than I was at his age. And when he falls in love, *seryoso siya*. I like Angel [Locsin] for him. I wanted her *sana* to make a special appearance in "Enteng" [as Darna]. *'Di ba* cute?

From "Lastikman" (2002) to "Enteng," your director has always been Tony Reyes. Do you have a secret formula?

We are each other's lucky charm.

Any comedians you look up to?

Charlie Chaplain and Dolphy.

Do you have any unfulfilled fantasies?

(Smiles) To buy a Ferrari. Kidding aside, I'm content with what I have; I don't yearn for more.

How about fantasies involving women?

(Laughs) Let's not go there. Allergic *ako sa intriga*.

'Ilusyunada'

Pardon the stage mom in me. I urge you all to catch my *dalagita* IC in his comedy play, "Ilusyunada," at Metro Bar West Ave 8 p.m. tonight. He has nine gorgeous leading men. Time to get naughty (with the boys) if you want to catch Santa's attention.

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com)

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PETRON

Gov't OKs clearinghouse for vehicle insurance

Junks proposal of GSIS to be appointed sole policy issuer

By Michelle V. Remo

THE INSURANCE COMMISSION SAID IT HAS ALREADY gotten the nod of the Land Transportation Office (LTO) for the implementation of the proposed clearinghouse system for the sale of vehicle insurance policies.

Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Escobillo said the insurance industry was all set for the implementation of the reform measure, which is aimed at addressing the rampant sale of fake compulsory third partly liability (CTPL) insurance policies. The clearinghouse system would be implemented early next year, she said.

This means that the LTO has turned down the alternative reform proposal of state-owned Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) of being the sole issuer of CTPL policies to prevent fraudulent activities by the private sector.

Escobillo said the clearinghouse system could deliver some P3 billion worth of revenues next year from the sale of CTPL policies to legitimate insurance companies as against the P1.3 billion this year. The insurance industry should have collected P2.7 billion worth of revenues from the vehicle insurance business this year, but about P1.4 billion were not properly recorded partly because of fraudulent sale of CTPL policies that duped vehicle owners, she added.

Under the clearinghouse system, vehicle owners will have to pay the amount of insurance premiums they bought through accredited banks. The banks will then forward the data to the CTPL Processing Center (CPC), which will be operated by licensed non-life insurance companies. The CPC is a facility to determine whether the insurance policies bought by a vehicle owner is legitimate or fake. Vehicle owners are advised to get their CTPL policies from licensed insurance agents.

Once it has cleared the sale of an insurance policy, the CPC will forward the information to the database system of the LTO for recording.

Also, accredited banks will place CTPL policy payments to the bank accounts of the concerned insurance companies.

Escobillo said that so far, Union Bank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., and Bank of the Philippine Islands already have their systems in place for the implementation of the clearinghouse system. Equitable-PCI Bank will have its system in place by February next year, while Land Bank of the Philippines and other banks are expected to be ready anytime next year.

The implementation of the clearinghouse system will change the way vehicle owners get CTPL policies. Fraud in the vehicle insurance business usually happens when an individual buys a fake CTPL policy from unscrupulous agents loitering in the vicinity of LTO branches, and then registers his or her vehicle with the LTO using the fake insurance policy. Under the existing system, the LTO does not have suffi-

GOV'T/ B2

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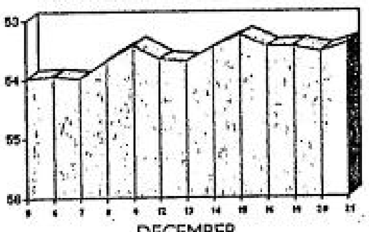

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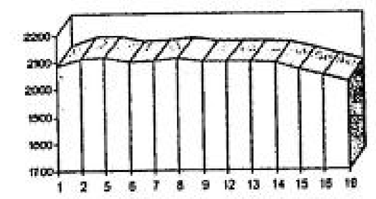

(See stock market report on Page B4)

Shares up slightly

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.59-percent higher yesterday as investors picked up bargains and fund managers carried out window-dressing to boost their portfolios ahead of the

SHARES/ B2

BCDA to auction 2 Fort Boni lots in '06

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BASES CONVERSION AND Development Authority yesterday said it would bid some 15 hectares of land in Fort Bonifacio worth about P4 billion in 2006.

BCDA vice president Aileen Zosa said two lots in the northern part of the Bonifacio Global City would be up for bidding early next year.

Zosa said a 6.6-hectare lot is in the North Bonifacio area while another 8.5 hectares of property is in the Northern Central Business District.

"These lots are up for sale, lease, or joint-venture development," she said. "Both areas are for mixed-use, meaning the development could be a combination of commercial and residential (purposes)."

Both areas are located north of S&R Price Mart, near the Fort Bonifacio Gate 1 along J.P. Rizal Avenue, where the neighboring lot measuring 10.5 hectares is owned by Metro Bank.

Both lots are near the institutional area, which is comprised, among others, of the Manila-Japanese School, the International School and the British School.

Zosa said the mixed-use development would be able to take advantage of the amenities and facilities provided by the schools as well as the nearby site of the proposed St. Luke's Hospital.

Zosa said major developers and embassies have sounded off interest in the two pieces of property as early as last October.

"This is the remaining big block of lots within Bonifacio Global City, which is probably why most of the developers are really interested," she said. "For those developers who have not bought or developed lots in the Global City, this is their last chance to penetrate the market."

Those who expressed interest are the SM Group, Ayala Land,

BCDA/ B4

WHAT'S INSIDE
Gov't '05 borrowings reach P237B /B3
Funding bottlenecks slowing Roro /B4

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Altis 1.8 E A/T	878,000	100,000	66,560	45,836	36,536	26,072	21,030	18,160
Altis 1.6 E A/T	800,000	100,000	59,530	41,000	32,688	23,326	18,822	16,244
Altis 1.6 E M/T	765,000	100,000	56,388	38,831	30,962	22,094	17,828	15,385
Altis 1.6 J M/T	708 000	100,000	51 257	35 297	28 150	20 088	16 209	13 985

MODEL	SRP	DOWNPAYMENT	12	18	24	36	48	60
Innova 2.5 G A/T	1,045,000	100,000	82,039	56,495	45,014	32,122	25,919	22,384
Innova 2.5 G M/T	980,000	100,000	76,188	52,460	41,807	29,834	24,073	20,787
Innova 2.0 G A/T	985,000	100,000	76,638	52,776	42,054	30,010	24,215	20,010
Innova 2.0 G M/T	930,000	100,000	71,687	49,366	39,341	28,074	22,653	19,559
Innova 2.5 E M/T	885,000	100,000	67,636	46,576	37,121	26,489	21,374	18,454
Innova 2.5 J M/T	798,000	100,000	59,804	41,183	32,829	23,427	18,903	16,317
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Gov't OKs . . .

From page B1

cient means to determine whether a CTPL policy is fake or not.

The clearinghouse system would also provide vehicle owners the option to simply purchase their CTPL policies online through the electronic payment system (EPS), Escobillo said.

The LTO preferred the proposed clearinghouse system over the GSIS plan of letting the government-owned agency solely take care of the vehicle insurance business, which would put many workers in the non-life insurance industry out of their jobs.

Shares up slightly

From page B1

yearend holidays, dealers said.

The composite index added 12.27 points to 2,075.05 after trading between 2,064.61 and 2,075.83 on volume of 734 million shares worth P1.17 billion.

The broader all-shares index gained 6.30 points to 1,259.74.

Gainers outnumbered losers 38 to 24, with 49 stocks unchanged.

"We were down sharply last week and investors have taken advantage of this weakness to position for 2006," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings.

Some fund managers have also been purchasing high-flying stocks to window-dress their portfolios before presenting them to clients by the end of the year, dealers said.

Ayala Land was the main mover, closing up 20 centavos to P9.80, with parent Ayala Corp. adding P5 to P305.

SM Prime Holdings advanced 20 centavos to P8, while parent SM Investments Corp. fell by a peso to P239. *AFP*

King con

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

JUST BETWEEN US GIRLS, SOMEBODY personally close to Gloriaetta told me that, definitely, she would have to get back at those who caused her some king-size political headache.

That was the time—well, the HEIGHT—of the "Hello Garci" tape scandal, that major pain in the political neck of this cute vengeful administration a few months ago.

Over cheap Japanese food in Quezon City, my source (who brought along an assistant) talked about the strategy of this cute administration to prevent its downfall.

I could believe our source even then. For one, the source had a reputation in political circles as one of the leading men in Gloriaetta's crisis management team.

Today, not just a few in big business say that, for this cute administration of Gloriaetta, it is definitely payback time.

Well, such a thinking even showed in the stock market, as prices the past couple of days went somewhere down there in the vicinity of the South Pole.

* * *

AMONG the perceived "enemies" of this cute administration is, of course, the Lopez group, which runs the publicly listed Meralco as its biggest private stockholder.

Now, during the height of the "Hello Garci" tape scandal, rumors erupted that the Lopez group gave tens of millions of pesos to fund the campaign to oust Gloriaetta.

Our source (who was said to be within whispering distance to Gloriaetta at that time) intimated to me one important thinking of the Palace crisis team.

And that was, the team suspected the Lopez group of backing the ouster campaign to catapult Vice President Noli de Castro into power.

As everybody knows, De Castro came from another Lopez company, the second most watched television network in the country, none other than ABS-CBN.

Such a scenario even made its rounds in big business at that time.

You even had the influential Makati Business Club (said to be backed by the Ayala group), which called for Gloriaetta's resignation.

Now the executive director of MBC is Guillermo Luz. His brother is DepEd undersecretary Mike Luz, who was unceremoniously kicked out of the department for no apparent reason.

At the height of the "Hello Garci" crisis, newspaper headlines also screamed about the position of former President Corazon Aquino, known as "Tita Cory" in my barangay, and she was also for Gloriaetta's resignation.

Tita Cory's family happens to own Hacienda Luisita. They are also now in trouble over some issues on agrarian reform.

It is all part of the "psywar." This cute administration still thinks it must secure its future by sending a message to those in big business who may be entertaining thoughts of ousting Gloriaetta.

Who is next? Did I hear "Lopez group?"

* * *

ME, I have no love lost for this Meralco either.

You see, the Meralco guys cut trees in my neighborhood with abandon, just because the trees get in the way of Meralco's electric posts and wires. Hellooo! Isn't it possible, boss, that the Meralco posts and wires get in the way of the trees instead?

In every other stretch of sidewalk in Metro Manila, Meralco's huge posts are right smack in the middle, proudly obstructing every poor harried pedestrian.

Just try to pay your bill at any Meralco office! They make you wait for a lifetime. Really, they even make us line up as if we are asking them for a favor. Look, we are already giving them money, aren't we?

But then again, Meralco plays an important role to this country.

It is a listed firm in the stock market, and the market has spoken about the reports that this cute administration was thinking of a Meralco takeover.

The market, as I said, went south. It is the market's way of saying that people do not like what they hear from this cute administration.

And so to those in big business, the newfound tactic of this cute administration to take over a publicly listed company like Meralco can only mean disaster.

You know, it is to business what "CPR" is to prayer rally. It is meant to bring us down to our knees.

* * *

PRECISELY, the consultant-recommended plan for a possible government "takeover" of Meralco (or something even more vague than that) is the exact opposite of what the rest of the world has been doing for the past 20 years or so.

And that is PRIVATIZATION.

Look, our own Congress already decided that privatization should be better for us—not the other way around. The law says that this cute administration must sell the assets of Napocor.

But the so-called Napocor mafia is now lobbying in Congress to delay its privatization. Why? Only the mafia knows exactly why, and it is not out of some altruistic reasons that they are selling to Congress.

And now, through some unknown consultant who supposedly recommended an unwritten plan on Meralco, this cute administration floated to the public the idea of its taking over the publicly listed firm.

What in heaven's name for? Well, it seems that Meralco and our beloved Napocor (with its debts of P600 billion) had a little spat since only about 11 years ago, starting in 1994.

Again—that was 11 long years ago! If it is true that Napocor and Meralco were fighting over such a huge amount as P42 billion, Napocor should have raised hell already 11 years ago, or as soon as Meralco violated the supposed "agreement."

At least I know that a well-managed corporation would have raised hell immediately. It would not wait for 11 years ago.

So why does this cute administration, which has been around for four long years, want to do something DRASTIC EXTREME and SEVERE only now?

I mean, does the timing of this king of the Palace cons suck or what!

* * *

AS for the reported view of a certain Jesus Arranza that the members of the Federation of Philippine Industries may also want to take over Meralco, is neither here nor there.

First of all, those in big business hardly know Arranza. Me, I only know that he was once known as "Jess Chua," who worked for Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., selling cooking oil. Today he has no known link with any manufacturing business.

Now why would anybody want to change his name—you know, like Mario Crespo did, who is now known as Mark Jimenez? Beats me!

Granted that Chua, este, Arranza was speaking for an in behalf of the entire business community, when he said that business should also choose to convert their "receivables" from Meralco into equity, I only have one little problem.

And that is, if members of the federation get equity in Meralco, will they in turn give us, their customers, that same equity in their own companies?

Look, they paid for their electricity to Meralco. They already charged us, the consumers, for their electricity cost. It was included in their prices.

And so they now get from Meralco a rebate. It means "windfall" for them, as the BIR already determined. Do we not get a share of the windfall, which is our own money in the first place? No way? Okay, so this is the king of all cons, is that it?

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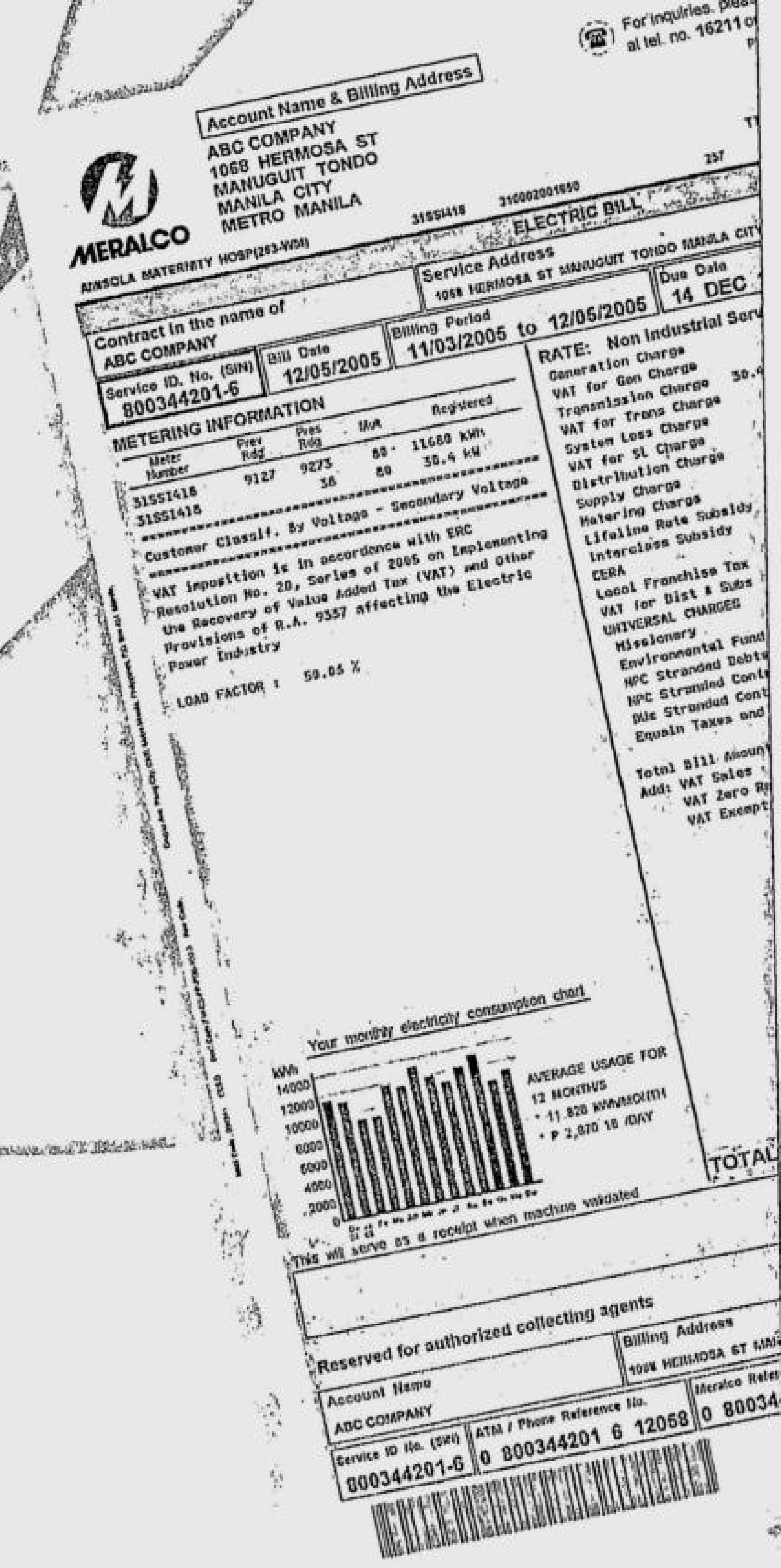

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MERALCO

Gov't '05 borrowings reach P237B

Bulk of borrowings used to fill in budget gap, pre-pay '06 debts

MONKEY BUSINESS
Stuffed monkeys translate to wads of cash in downtown Baguio. The simian toys, now sweeping the streets of the Pine City, are made in China. Each costs P70. EV ESPIRITU

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S net borrowings this year has already reached P237.152 billion as of November.

The bulk of the borrowings was used to fill in the budget deficit for 2005, and pre-fund next year's financing requirements, according to data from the Department of Finance.

The data also showed that the latest net borrowing figure was a result of the P146.41 billion worth of credit sourced from domestic lenders, and P90.742 billion from foreign ones.

Net borrowings are the difference between the amount of fresh loans borrowed, and the amount of matured liabilities that the government had paid.

Gross borrowings for the first 11 months of the year stood at 595.214 billion. Of the amount, P209.909 billion were foreign loans, while P385.305 billion were domestic. Loan payments, meanwhile, stood at P358.062 billion.

Fiscal authorities have stressed the government's inclination to borrow domestically rather than go abroad to limit its exposure to foreign exchange risks, which could aggravate its debt burden.

But in November alone, the government posted a net payment of P5.819 billion. This means that it paid more matured liabilities than it borrowed. Gross borrowings in November totaled P17.008 billion, while loan payments reached P22.827 billion.

The national government's foreign borrowings are composed of official development assistance from multilateral and bilateral agencies in the form of project of program loans, and commercial borrowings through the issuance of sovereign bonds in the international market.

Domestic borrowings are undertaken through the issuance of government securities, such as Treasury bills and bonds, and retail treasury bonds (RTBs).

Of the gross domestic borrowings, P283.588 billion were undertaken through the issuance of T-bond, P57.345 billion from T-bills, and P44.372 billion from RTBs.

LandBank, DBP back out of Al Amanah bailout

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT has abandoned plans to wipe out the P400 million in capital shortfall of Al-Amanah Islamic Bank prior to its privatization, banking sources said.

Instead, the government will now bid out the country's first and only Islamic bank on an "as-is-where-is" basis, after the two state-owned banks backed out from bailing out the Islamic bank.

Government sources said the Development Bank of the Philippines and Land Bank of the Philippines, which were earlier invited to subscribe to a planned subordinated debt, or tier 2 issuance by the Islamic bank, had expressed that they were no longer keen on the offer.

"Their concerns are valid," one source said. "They said it would be difficult to justify the transaction with the COA (Commission of Audit)."

Al-Amanah was among the assets lined up by the cash-strapped government for privatization next year. But to make it more attractive to new investors, the government had wanted to clean up its books first. The proposed strategy was for Al-Amanah to plug its capital deficiency through a tier 2 issuance, with government banks investing in the debt instruments.

With the DBP and Landbank no longer keen on the offer, the government has no choice but to sell it on an as-is-where-is basis, which means that the new investor has to take over the Islamic bank and assume its liabilities.

Al-Amanah's total assets stands at about P87.16 million as against liabilities of P502.8 million. The bank is thus currently undercapitalized by about P415.7 million, and has a negative return on equity of about 15 percent.

Watchdog details government dealings

By Ronnel W. Domingo

AN ANTI-CORRUPTION WATCHDOG is calling for more volunteers to monitor the government's dealings.

In the 15 months since its inception, the Coalition Against Corruption has barely scratched the surface of government affairs, according to Ramon del Rosario Jr., CAC chair.

Del Rosario yesterday said in a briefing that since its launch in September 2004, the group had monitored the distribution of textbooks and medicines, auctions and awards of government procurement contracts, the internal revenue allotment and pork barrel in Congress, and lifestyle checks and cases involving the Commission on Elections.

CAC members include the Makati Business Club, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and its National Secretariat for Social Action, the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, the Caucus of Development NGO Networks, the National Citizen's Movement for Free Elections and the Transparency and Accountability Network.

According to MBC executive director Guillermo Luz, the CAC had sent 51 volunteers to monitor government contract auctions worth P3.3 billion.

Luz said the group mostly monitored the transactions of the Department of National Defense, which invited CAC volunteers to auctions of contracts worth P3.16 billion.

Other agencies monitored include the Philippine National Police, Department of Tourism, Department of Health and Public Estates Authority.

The group suggested that more bidders should be invited "to participate (in the auctions) so that direct negotiations could be avoided," Luz said. Technical working groups must also exercise due diligence in reviewing specifications of bids to avoid delays.

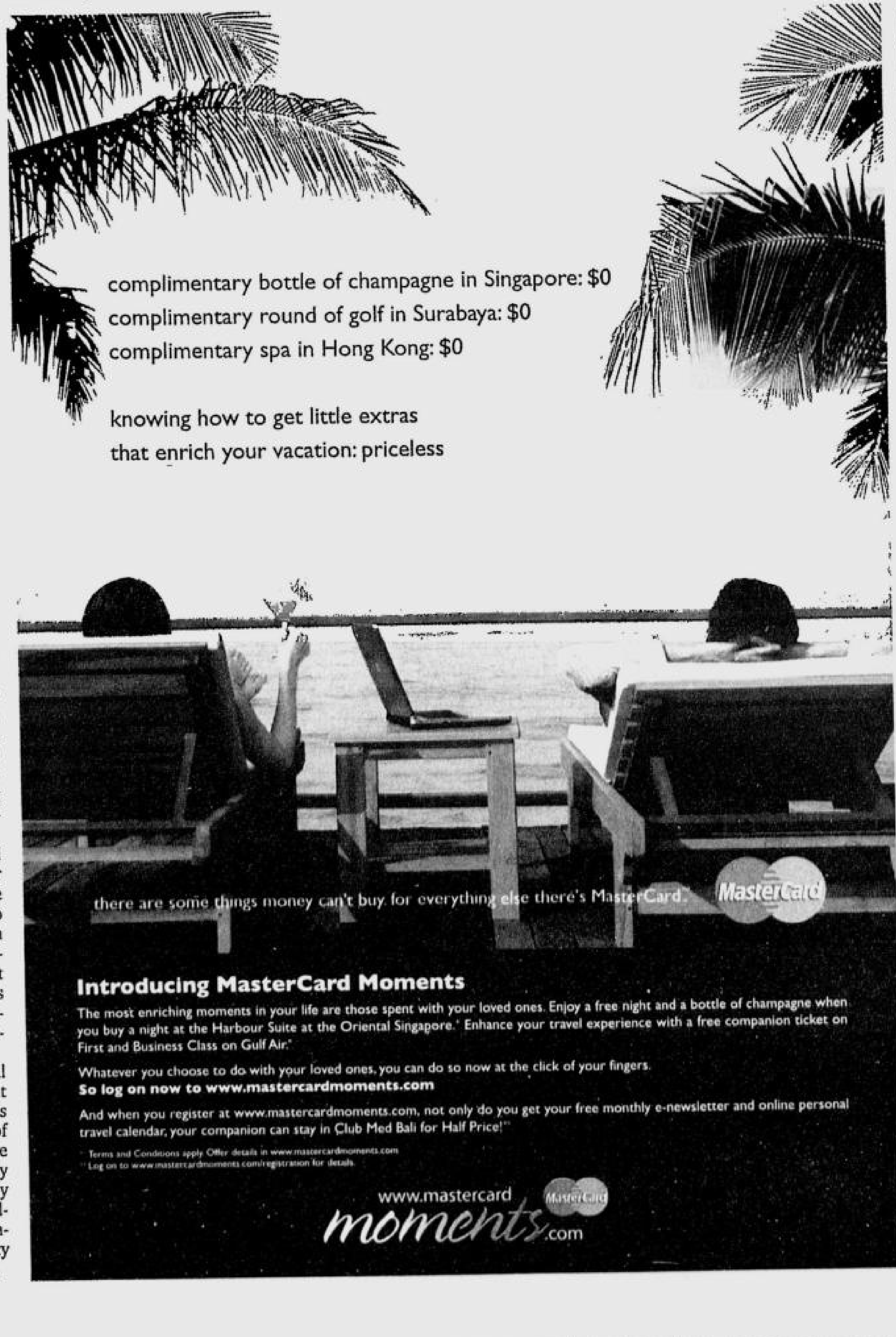
As for the IRA, he said volunteers were able to witness how officials of 85 barangay units—mostly in Metro Manila—went about their business after receiving P151.62 million from the Department of Budget and Management this year.

"(The volunteers saw that) the barangay officials were not reporting how much IRA they got and how these were used," Luz said.

He cited cases where IRA funds were used by barangay officials for junkets, referred to as "observation or exposure trips."

On the pork barrel, Luz said most of the 235 representatives and 23 senators did not reply when the CAC asked for data about their priority development assistance funds.

"At least 110 projects or a quarter of all that were monitored—representing P380.5 million—were not specified and were reported only as 'priority programs and projects,'" he said.



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AN APPEAL TO ABS-CBN

December 17, 2005

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation
Ma. Ignacia Street corner Sargeant Esguerra Avenue
Quezon City, Philippines
(Thru: Mr. Arman Gante's E-mail)

Re : **Request for Ms. Wesy B. Quisumbing's Story to Be shown on Kontrobersyal**

Attn : **Mr. Boy Abunda**
TV Host – Kontrobersyal

Mr. Denmark G. Alejandro
Segment Producer / Writer – Kontrobersyal

Mr. Armand Gante
Researcher – Kontrobersyal

Gentlemen:

I write on behalf of my client, **Ms. Wesy B. Quisumbing.**

On December 6, 2005, the story of Ms. Quisumbing was bannered.

On the basis of said story, you showed deep interest in featuring the life of Ms. Quisumbing and requested me thru a letter dated December 7, 2005 to feature her story in the December 16, 2005 segment of your TV Show, "Kontrobersyal." In the same letter, you likewise emphasized the need to feature Ms. Quisumbing's story to ultimately put a stop to the discrimination of people similarly situated as Ms. Quisumbing because of their "sexual orientations."

In view of your consistent and very ardent requests and despite Ms. Quisumbing's very hectic schedule, my client accepted your invitation for her to be interviewed by the award winning and very amiable and very respectable host, Mr. Boy Abunda. Several postponements of the interview were, thereafter, made until such time when the schedule of Mr. Boy Abunda was cleared for the interview. Thus, Ms. Quisumbing and her entourage flew all the way from Cebu to Manila for said purpose and the interview was conducted with all your assurances that the same shall be shown on December 16, 2005.

Guided by the principles of responsible journalism and TV Ethics and with a deep sense of professionalism and intellect, Mr. Boy Abunda (who was fully cognizant of the parameters of the sub-judice doctrine and delving merely on the life and experiences of Ms Quisumbing), conducted the interview without asking any questions concerning the merits of the cases respecting the Quisumbing Family.

Be that is it may, and around 11:30 in the evening of December 15, 2005, you called me up thru cellular phone that you also interviewed the counsel of Ms. Quisumbing's adversaries to hear their side of the story. You reasoned out that you had to do it to maintain impartiality and objectiveness in your reports. My client and I, trusting on your deep sense of impartiality and professionalism, did not howl any protest respecting the matter.

Surprisingly, and without due regard to the doctrine of estoppel, one of the aforesaid adversaries of Ms. Quisumbing in the case entitled "Wesy B. Quisumbing vs. University of San Jose Recoletos (and Norberto B. Quisumbing, Jr.), Civil Case No. CEB-31885 filed a Motion for Injunction with the Regional Trial Court of Cebu City, Branch 5 (presided over by Judge Ireneo Lee Gaco, Jr.,) to prevent the showing of Ms. Quisumbing's story on "Kontrobersyal" based on the sub-judice doctrine. I attended the hearing of said motion on December 16, 2005 and argued otherwise for two (2) long, tiring and arduous hours. In the same hearing, I also emphasized, among others, the constitutional freedom of expression and of the press and the need for the life of Ms. Quisumbing to be shown on "Kontrobersyal" as it concerns public matter and interest.

In view thereof, the RTC of Cebu, Branch 5, which obviously has no territorial jurisdiction over a non-party to the aforesaid case, ABS-CBN (which is based in Manila), did not issue any Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) and/or Injunction to prevent the showing of Ms. Quisumbing's story on "Kontrobersyal."

Around 10 P.M. last night, however, you broke the unexpected news that Ms. Quisumbing's story would no longer be shown on the December 16, 2005 segment of "Kontrobersyal" as the counsel of Ms. Quisumbing's adversary directed you to stop the showing on the alleged basis of the sub-judice doctrine. This unfortunate decision on your part happened at the most unholy hour when Ms. Quisumbing and your very eager televiewers were already glued to their TV sets waiting for your most "Kontrobersyal" story of the year. You, however, assured us that the showing of Ms. Quisumbing's story was just "put on hold and would be further edited" for you to really be assured of non-violation of any court doctrine.

In the meantime, Ms. Quisumbing, has once again felt severe depression and discrimination which your TV story sought to prevent. For while interviews concerning court cases of the so-called "normal people" are being done wantonly and without due regard to the sub-judice doctrine, Ms. Quisumbing's personal story, which does not even touch on the pending cases, however, is apparently being suppressed just because she is perceived to belong to a very unique group of people.

In this regard, we appeal to your sense of fairness and justice and do the editing of her pre-taped story as you wish so as not to run afoul to the merits of the pending cases in court. We, however, urge you to show her story on the next schedule of your "Kontrobersyal" TV show and inform the public about it in due course so that the psychological trauma and severe depression which are being experienced by Ms. Quisumbing which were brought about the non-showing of her story last night, may be assuaged

On top of these, we believe that you owe it both to the public and to your profession as responsible journalists and TV Host/s to raise the awareness of the people about giving due respect, acceptance and understanding of Ms. Wesy B. Quisumbing and of persons similarly situated

Thank you very much for giving this matter your utmost preferential attention.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) Paris G. Real
Counsel for Ms. Wesy B. Quisumbing
(Real Brotario and Real Law Offices)

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS - FORT WORTH DIVISION

In re) Chapter 11 Case
MIRANT CORPORATION, et al.,) Case No. 03-46590 (DML)11
Debtors.) Jointly Administered

PUBLICATION NOTICE OF (1) ENTRY OF ORDER CONFIRMING DEBTORS' AMENDED AND RESTATED SECOND AMENDED JOINT CHAPTER 11 PLAN OF REORGANIZATION, DATED DECEMBER 9, 2005; AND (2) CERTAIN DEADLINES ASSOCIATED THEREWITH

Confirmation of Plan. An order (the "Confirmation Order") [Docket No. 12569] confirming the Amended and Restated Second Amended Joint Plan of Reorganization for Mirant Corporation and its Affiliated Debtors, dated December 9, 2005 (as amended, the "Plan," attached as Exhibit 1 to the Confirmation Order), of Mirant Corporation and its affiliates, as debtors and debtors in possession in these chapter 11 cases (collectively, the "Debtors"[1]), was entered by the Clerk of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas (Fort Worth Division) (the "Bankruptcy Court") on December 9, 2005 (the "Confirmation Date"). Unless otherwise defined in this Notice, capitalized terms used in this Notice shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the Plan and the Confirmation Order.

The Confirmation Order and the Plan are available for inspection in the office of the Clerk of the Bankruptcy Court at the United States Bankruptcy Court, Eldon B. Mahon United States Courthouse, 501 W. Tenth Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76102. The Confirmation Order and the Plan (a) are also available on the Debtors' website at www.mirant-caseinfo.com and on the website of Bankruptcy Services LLC, at www.bsillc.com or (b) may be obtained upon written request to Mirant Corporation, c/o Bankruptcy Services, L.L.C., 757 Third Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10017; Fax (646) 282-2550.

Pending the Effective Date, the terms of the Plan (including the exhibits thereto, the Plan Documents and all documents and agreements executed pursuant to the Plan) and the Confirmation Order are binding upon New Mirant and its Affiliates, the Debtors (other than the Excluded Debtors), the holders of all Claims against and Equity Interests in the Debtors, whether or not impaired under the Plan, each Person acquiring property under the Plan, any other party in interest, any Person or Entity making an appearance in these Chapter 11 Cases and each of the foregoing's respective heirs, successors, assigns, trustees, executors, administrators, affiliates, officers, directors, managers, members, partners, agents, representatives, attorneys, beneficiaries or guardians. To the extent any provision of the Confirmation Order may be inconsistent with the terms of the Plan or any Plan Documents, the terms of the Confirmation Order are binding and conclusive

Parties Who Must Receive Service of Your Notices and Pleadings. All pleadings and notices in connection with the deadlines and matters set forth below or in any way related to the Plan or the Confirmation Order must be served upon the following parties (the "Notice Parties"): (a) attorneys for the Debtors, Thomas E Lauria, Esq., White & Case LLP, Wachovia Financial Center, 200 South Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 4900, Miami, FL 33131; Gerard Uzzi, Esq., White & Case LLP, 1155 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York, 10036-2787, email: guzzi@whitecase.com; Michelle C. Campbell, Esq., White & Case LLP, 633 West Fifth Street, Los Angeles, CA 90071, email: mcampbell@whitecase.com; (b) attorneys for the Official Unsecured Creditors' Committee for Mirant Americas Generation, LLC, Bruce Zirinsky, Esq., Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP, One World Financial Center, New York, NY 10281, email: bruce.zirinsky@cwt.com; Ingrid Bagby, Esq., email: ingrid.bagby@cwt.com; (c) attorneys for the Official Unsecured Creditors' Committee for Mirant Corporation, Paul Silverstein, Esq., Andrews Kurth LLP, 450 Lexington Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10017, email: paulsilverstein@andrewskurth.com; Fredric Sosnick, Esq., Shearman & Sterling LLP, 599 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10022-6069, email: fsosnick@shearman.com (d) attorneys for the Official Committee of Equity Security Holders, Edward Weisfeiner, Esq., Brown Rudnick Berlack Israels LLP, Seven Times Square, New York, NY 10036, email: eweisfeiner@brownrudnick.com; Leslie H. Scharf, Esq., email: lscharf@brownrudnick.com; (e) attorneys for the Examiner, Richard Roberson, Esq., Gardere & Wynne Sewell LLP, Thanksgiving Tower, 1601 Elm Street, Suite 3000, Dallas, TX 75201, email: rroberson@gardere.com; Michael Cooley, Esq., email: mcooley@gardere.com; (f) Office of the United States Trustee, 1100 Commerce Street, Room 976, Dallas, TX 75242-1011, email: George.F.McElreath@usdoj.gov; (g) the Fee Review Committee, Dean Nancy Rapoport, Univ. of Houston Law Center, 100 Law Center, Houston, TX, email: NRapoport@Central.UH.EDU; and (h) General Counsel, Mirant Corporation, 1155 Perimeter Center West, Suite 100, Atlanta, Georgia 30338.

Bar Date for Filing Rejection Damage Claims. Unless otherwise provided in the Confirmation Order or Plan, all Claims created by the rejection of executory contracts or unexpired leases or the expiration or termination of any executory contract or unexpired lease prior to the Confirmation Date must be filed with the Bankruptcy Court and served upon Debtors, (a) in the case of an executory contract or unexpired lease rejected by the Debtors prior to the Confirmation Date, in accordance with any applicable orders of the Bankruptcy Court or (b) in the case of an executory contract or unexpired lease that (i) was terminated or expired by its terms prior to the Confirmation Date, or (ii) is rejected pursuant to Section 14.1 of the Plan or by separate motion to reject post-confirmation, no later than (A) thirty (30) days after the Confirmation Date (or in the case of a separate motion granted after the entry of the Confirmation Order, thirty (30) days after the final order granting the motion is entered on the Bankruptcy Court's Docket). All such Claims not filed within such times will be forever barred from assertion against the Debtors, New Mirant and their respective Estates, Affiliates or the Assets. All proofs of claim must be (1) filed at the following address: Mirant Corporation, c/o Bankruptcy Services, L.L.C., 757 Third Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10017; Fax (646) 282-2550; and (2) served upon the Notice Parties.

Bar Date for Filing Administrative Claims. The holder of an Administrative Claim, other than (i) a DIP Claim, (ii) a Fee Claim, (iii) a liability incurred and payable in the ordinary course of business by a Debtor (and not disputed), or (iv) an Administrative Claim that has been Allowed on or before the Effective Date or as part of the California Settlement, must file with the Bankruptcy Court and serve upon the Notice Parties, notice of such Administrative Claim by January 24, 2006 (which is within forty (40) days after service of the Notice of Entry of Confirmation Order). Such notice must include at a minimum (A) the name of the Debtor(s) which are purported to be liable for the Administrative Claim, (B) the name of the holder of the Administrative Claim, (C) the amount of the Administrative Claim, and (D) the basis of the Administrative Claim. **THE FAILURE TO FILE AND SERVE SUCH NOTICE TIMELY AND PROPERLY SHALL RESULT IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE CLAIM BEING FOREVER BARRED AND DISCHARGED.**

Bar Date for Filing Professional Fee Claims. On or before forty-five (45) days after the Effective Date, all applications for final allowances of compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to sections 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 503(b), and 1103 of the Bankruptcy Code for professional services rendered through the Effective Date (each a "Final Fee Application") must be filed with the Bankruptcy Court, together with proof of service thereof, and served upon the Notice Parties. **THE FAILURE TO TIMELY FILE AND SERVE SUCH FINAL FEE APPLICATION SHALL RESULT IN THE FEE CLAIM BEING FOREVER BARRED AND DISCHARGED.**

Objections, if any, to any Final Fee Applications shall be filed with the Court, together with proof of service thereof, and served upon the applicant and the Notice Parties, so as to be received not later than 4:00 p.m., prevailing Central Time, on the date that is five business days before the hearing on the Final Fee Applications.

WHITE & CASE LLP

Craig H. Averch
Michelle C. Campbell
633 West Fifth Street, Suite 1900
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Thomas E Lauria • Gerard H. Uzzi
Wachovia Financial Center
200 South Biscayne Blvd.
Miami, Florida 33131

J. Christopher Shore
1155 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

COUNSEL TO DEBTORS AND DEBTORS IN POSSESSION

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[1] In accordance with Sections 15.3, 17.16 and 17.26 of the Plan, the Plan is deemed to exclude Mirant New York, Inc., Mirant Bowline, LLC, Mirant Lovett, LLC, Hudson Valley Gas Corporation and Mirant NY-Gen, LLC (the "Excluded Debtors") from the MAG Debtors and the Confirmation Hearing with respect to each such Debtor is adjourned until further notice or order of the Bankruptcy Court.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 21, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	33.5	34	33.5	34	586,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	54.5	55.5	54	54.5	1,345,200
China Banking Corp.	600	605	595	595	730
Citystate Savings Bank	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75	300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.61	0.61	0.6	0.6	200,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	56	58.5	56	58.5	219,400
International Exch. Bank	21	21	21	21	110,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33	33	32.5	33	936,000
Security Bank Corp.	33	33	33	33	47,600
Union Bank of the Phil.	31.5	32	31.5	31.5	2,200
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	60,000
First Abacus Financial	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	20,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3115	3120	3115	3120	1,230
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	7,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	140	140	140	140	2,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2110	2110	2110	2110	910
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13	13	13	13	36,300
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.9	0.91	0.9	0.91	830,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	710	720	710	715	60,740
Ipeople Inc.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	10,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	100,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.4	3.45	3.4	3.45	1,046,000
Transpacific Broadband	1.38	1.4	1.38	1.4	30,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1790	1790	1780	1785	34,330
Ivantage Corp.	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.58	2,010,000
Philweb Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.014	0.015	96,300,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.75	15	14.75	15	26,500
Manila Electric Co. B	21.5	22	21.5	22	311,000
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	1,704,000
Petron Corp.	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	3,173,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.64	1.64	1.64	1.64	10,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	80,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	222,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.4	9.5	9.4	9.4	450,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	50,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	710,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.4	4.35	4.4	4,215,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21.75	22	21.75	22	18,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41.5	42	41.5	42	873,200
Pancake House Inc.	3.6	3.6	3.55	3.55	100,000
RFM Corp.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	10,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	60,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	64	64.5	139,000
San Miguel Corp. B	87	87.5	87	87.5	205,900
Universal Robina Corp.	18	18	18	18	2,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	710,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	305	310	302.5	305	463,320
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.9	1,304,000
Alo Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	200,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	60,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.89	160,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.48	1.48	1.48	1.48	25,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.15	0.18	0.15	0.165	6,850,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.1	14,004,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	500,000
CADP Group Corp.	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87	90,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	330,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.32	0.3	0.31	1,630,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.15	3.05	3.15	471,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	2,000,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	47	48.5	47	48.5	1,268,900
Global Equities Inc.	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	700,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.45	3.3	3.4	293,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	70,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.24	1,422,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.34	8,910,000
Paxys Inc.	5.9	6	5.8	5.8	999,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	90,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.24	1.24	1,200,000
Solid Group, Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	180,000
SM Investments Corp.	240	240	239	239	84,300
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	700,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	550,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	10,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	10,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	7.1	7.5	7.1	7.5	1,403,000
Pryce Corp.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	500,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.96	0.97	0.96	0.96	20,720,000
Fairmont Holdings, Inc.	0.67	0.7	0.67	0.7	310,870,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	160,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	1,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	33,300
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.4	9.5	9.4	9.5	78,000
Far Eastern University	600	600	600	600	500
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.6	9.9	9.6	9.8	6,566,000
C&P Homes Inc.	2.06	2.06	2	2	260,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.41	0.41	650,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.32	1.32	4,237,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	500,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	300,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	20,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	500,000
SM Development Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	8,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	8	7.9	8	6,495,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86	50,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	17,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6	20,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	3,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	10,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	670,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.245	590,000
Omico Corp.	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	10,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.32	1.34	1.3	1.32	911,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.62	1.68	1.62	1.66	5,360,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	27.5	27.5	27	27	61,300
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0036	0.0036	0.0034	0.0034	18,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.0065	0.0065	45,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	21,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	600,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	620,000

DISCLOSURES

THE **SECURITIES and Exchange Commission** approved the increase in the authorized capital stock of Universal Robina Corp. as well as its 15 percent stock dividend declaration in favor of stockholders of record as of Jan.14, 2006.

***

MIC Holdings Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Jan.26, 9 a.m. at the 8/F of DPC Place, Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of Jan. 5 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

***

BANK of the Philippine Islands declared cash dividends of P0.90 a share in favor of stockholders of record as of Jan. 4, 2006 and payable on Jan. 19, 2006.

Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

CURRENCIES

December 21, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.842602	1.000000	53.4940
Japan	Yen	0.007196	0.008540	0.4568
United Kingdom	Pound	1.478092	1.754200	93.8392
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.108696	0.129001	6.9008
Switzerland	Franc	0.644044	0.764351	40.8882
Canada	Dollar	0.719066	0.853388	45.6511
Singapore	Dollar	0.505976	0.600492	32.1227
Australia	Dollar	0.618378	0.733891	39.2588
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.235612	2.653224	141.9316
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.224694	0.266667	14.2651
Brunei	Dollar	0.504462	0.598695	32.0266
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Mexico	New Peso	0.078969	0.093721	5.0135
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South Africa	Rand	0.132756	0.157555	8.4282
Korea	Won	0.000829	0.000984	0.0526
Sweden	Kroner	0.105965	0.125759	6.7274
Syria	Pound	0.016232	0.019264	1.0305
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025377	0.030118	1.6111

BCDA to auction . . .

From page B1

Fort Bonifacio Corp., JG Summit group and Megaworld.

In October, BCDA officials said the agency was ready to sell or lease a total of about 16.4 hectares of prime land in Fort Bonifacio Global City while 61.3 hectares remain untouchable due to court litigation.

Outside Fort Bonifacio, the BCDA has a total of 3.6 hectares, which are all in the golf driving range area near the Villamor air base.

The agency also has 104 hectares of property that are tagged for future disposition.

Neda calls for more incentives for non-electronics exports

Furniture, minerals show good potential for growth, agency says

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT Authority (Neda) wants government to grant incentives to export-oriented industries outside the electronics sector, stressing the urgent need to diversify the country's exports amid a declining global demand for electronics.

Neda Director General Augusto Santos said the proposed incentives package, especially for selected exporters, should be part of the plan to rationalize the country's fiscal incentives system.

There is a pending bill in Congress to rationalize the granting of fiscal incentives, with the objective of eliminating 'unnecessary' tax and duty perks.

The rationalization plan came about due to huge revenue losses, estimated at P300 billion a year, from the generous granting of incentives at this time when the government is trying to conserve its resources.

Santos said the remaining incentives should be enjoyed by companies exporting products where the Philippines has a comparative advantage.

Dennis Arroyo, Neda director for policy and planning, said industries that could potentially boost the country's exports include minerals, high-fashion clothes and accessories, food and marine, furniture, automotive, logistics and construction services, tourism, and health and wellness.

"There is really a need to diversify because if we rely on cheap labor (such as for the assembly of raw-material electronics for exports), then China will continue having an edge," Arroyo told reporters.

He explained that while China has become a tough competitor in the area of assembly of raw-material electronics, the Philippines could shift its focus on manufacturing more valuable electronic products.

Better yet, the country should increase its exports of other products, he said.

Neda's call for the country to diversify its export products came following the slowdown in global demand for electronics, which was blamed on high oil prices that forced consumers to cut down on spending for non-basic items.

The NSO earlier reported that exports during the January-to-October period of this year stood at $33.764 billion, only a 3.2-percent growth from the same period last year.

The growth was far smaller than the original target of 10 percent and the revised target of 8 percent.

Electronics accounts for more than 60 percent of the country's exports.

In October alone, export of electronics dropped 9 percent to $2.4 billion.

Arroyo said the Neda does not expect the country to hit the 8-percent export growth target this year.

The growth is likely to settle between 3 and 5 percent, he said.

For 2006, Arroyo said export figures should be better.

The interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), the body tasked with setting the government's economic policies and targets, has set a 10-percent export growth target for this year and the next to complement the economic growth target of 5.3 to 6.3 percent for 2005 and 6.3 to 7.3 percent for 2006.

The Neda, however, earlier said the economic growth targets for this year and the next, as measured by the rise in gross domestic product, was not likely to be met.

Danding not keen on coco levy deal

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL CORP. CHAIR EDUARDO M. Cojuangco Jr. has ruled out a compromise with government on the contested P130-billion coconut levy fund allegedly used to acquire shares in food and beverage giant SMC and United Coconut Planters Bank.

Cojuangco instead urged the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) to ask the Sandiganbayan to set the 18-year old dispute for trial to resolve the matter, his lawyer Estelito Mendoza said in a statement sent to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

"The Sandiganbayan case has now been pending for more than 18 years. It is no longer time to talk of a compromise," Mendoza said in his statement.

He said Cojuangco had asked the Sandiganbayan to set the case for hearing "many times".

The Office of the Solicitor General and the PCGG, however, have opposed the suggestion.

"To assure that the case is concluded promptly, we invite the OSG and the PCGG to join us in asking the Sandiganbayan to set the case for trial, if at all possible, for daily hearings. If this is done, (the) trial shall be concluded this year and the case decided shortly thereafter—not after the lifetime of the PCGG," Mendoza said.

Funding bottlenecks slowing Roro

Editor's note: This part of the two-part special report should have been published yesterday. Due to technical problems, the conclusion came out ahead.

By Daxim L. Lucas

"OUR RECENT TRIP, WHERE WE HAD TO use Roro (roll-on, roll-off) ferry services to and from Cagayan de Oro, shows that President Arroyo has been duped once again into personally promoting the 'Nautical Highway' and all the benefits it supposedly offers the riding public."

Thus said Ed Gonzales of the Cebu City-based Easyriders motorcycle club last year in a complaint letter that eventually found its way to the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC).

"The nautical highway is a misnomer created by the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and supposedly supported by the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA)," Gonzales wrote. "However, nothing has changed since, and vehicle freight rates continue based on cubic meters while 'handling fees' are at their highest ever."

In an interview with the INQUIRER last week, Transportation Undersecretary Agustin R. Bengzon said that the complaint letter illustrated the weaknesses of the so-called "Strong Republic Nautical Highway" which the government—led by his office—is trying to correct.

At the same time, Bengzon said the letter also revealed the potential of the system of roadways and ports for linking the country's major islands to promote trade and tourism.

Old idea, new problems

The concept of a roadway to link the entire archipelago is hardly original.

Plans for a national highway were conceptualized as early as the 1950s, but never really saw fruition until the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos launched the ambitious "Maharlika Highway" along the country's western corridor.

For the first time, the Maharlika Highway allowed motorists to travel from Luzon to the Visayan islands of Samar and Leyte, and eventually to Mindanao.

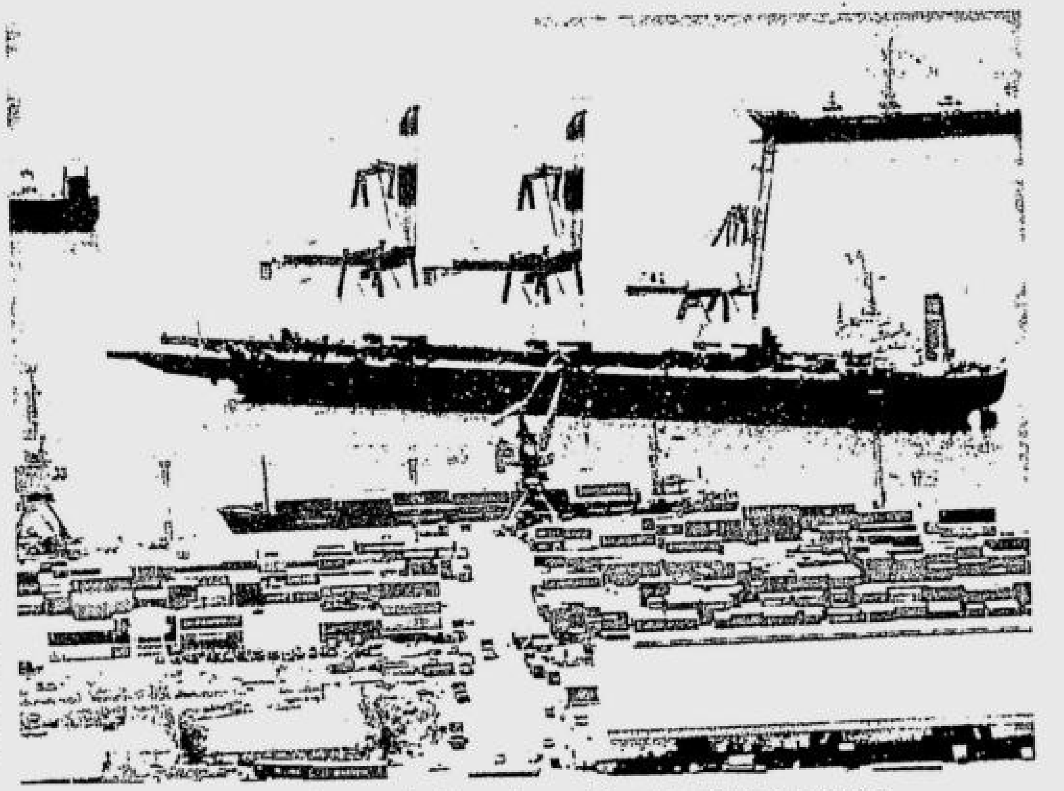
Where the channels were too wide for links like the San Juanico Bridge, a crude system of vessels were put in place to transport vehicles from one island to another.

It is this system which the government wanted to duplicate—and improve on—when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo issued EO 170 on Jan. 22, 2003.

With the EO, the establishment of roll-on, roll-off (Roro) routes became official government policy. This recognized the potential of the Roro transport system (RRTS) to provide a "cost effective" means of linking the country's islands and enhancing trade and tourism.

Under this scheme, ports capable of loading and unloading vehicles on and off specially equipped ships will be set up with government help, forming a bridge between existing road networks of the major islands of the archipelago.

Unlike the old system, however, the Roro system emphasizes the use of ships with ramps that allow vehicles to be driven on and off ships using their own power—thus the term roll-on, roll-off.



LINKING all of the country's ports has been planned since the 1950s. Under the administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the establishment of roll-on, roll-off (Roro) routes became official government policy.

The latest incarnation of this inter-island link is the "western nautical highway" which will link Batangas City to Mindoro to Aklan to Negros Island and Cebu, then on to Mindanao via Dipolog or Dapitan.

In theory, this system is faster, more efficient and cheaper since it eliminates the need for arrastre and stevedoring services which presently account for a significant portion of shipping fees.

SPECIAL REPORT

In practice, however, the development of the Strong Republic Nautical Highway is facing daunting challenges—especially for its smaller feeder routes—mainly because the government is no longer financially capable of bankrolling the entire project.

"As much as possible, we want the local government units and the private sector to pay for the required infrastructure," Bengzon said, noting that difficulties on the fiscal front made it difficult to imagine any form of state subsidy for anything but the most unattractive of "missionary routes".

'Lack of initiative, enthusiasm'

Instead, Bengzon said President Arroyo's exercise of "political will" resulted in a milestone that brought a novel approach to the idea of linking the archipelago.

Without having to dole out scarce funds to the implementing agencies, the DOTC deputy chief explained that the government simply provided a favorable climate for investment through regulatory and fiscal incentives, where the private sector and LGUs were encouraged to invest in or avail themselves of financing under their own steam.

The only problem is that many LGUs—long accustomed to being coddled and hand-held by the national government for everything from basic healthcare to infrastructure—remain unconvinced and timid about the scheme.

On the other hand, private firms which center on inter-island ship operations are not too eager to open links in routes with unproven track records of profitability.

The results, according to Bengzon, is that the project—while having already progressed by leaps and bounds—is being held back from fulfilling its potential.

"We want to get people from the private sector and the local governments involved," he said. "But the issue of viability delays the project."

Bengzon said some of the "kinks" in the system were caused by the inability of the proponents—both from the private sector and LGUs—to produce money for the project.

"It's either they can't borrow to finance their participation or they don't have the expertise," he said.

While many LGUs in coastal areas express their interest in putting up their own Roro facilities, they almost invariably back down when informed of the costs involved—and the fact that they will have to finance the projects themselves.

"They always complain, 'Ah masyadong mahal 'yan' (It's too expensive)," Bengzon said.

He complained that many LGU officials fail to realize that they can start small, mainly by buying—or even leasing—old World War II-era LCTs (landing craft, tank) which can provide basic Roro services without costing their operators an arm and a leg.

Even this proposal, however, poses unique problems for the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines, which has been designated as the main source of funding for one of President Arroyo's pet projects.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2005

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is given that the estate of the late ROSITA MANGAO nee FLORES, who died intestate, was extrajudicially settled by her heirs before Notary Public Atty. Joaquin M. Chua of Manila , per Doc. No. 46, Page No. 11, Book No. X, Series of 2005.
(PDI- Decx. 15, 22 & 29, 2005)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late RENATO E. RAMOS has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc. No. 15; Page No. 04; Book No. X; Series of 2005 of the notarial register of Notary Public Atty. Macur D. Marohombsar of Pasig City.
(PDI-Dec. 8, 15 & 22, 2005)

Notice of Self-adjudication by Geminiano Medalla of the estate of Trinidad Medalla Doc#153, Page#32, Book#II, Series of 2005 before Notary Public Rene Q. Pahulayan of Sto. Tomas Batangas
(PDI-Dec.15,22&29,2005)

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that Club Filipino stock certificate No. 1947 for one (1) share issued to Elvira A. Baluyut was reported lost. If no contest received, new certificate will be issued.
(PDI-Dec 15, 22 & 29, 2005)

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ERRATUM

In the advertisement of the **Office of the Ombudsman Bulletin of Vacant Positions** published in this paper on **December 14, 2005**, the item no. of the position **Associate Graft Investigation Officer II SG 18** should have read **Item no. OMBA-AGIO2-13-1998** and not as published.

Our apologies.

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that AYALA LAND, INC. Certificate No. 08211124 for One Hundred One Thousand One Hundred Ninety One (101,191) shares issued in the name of JOSE TANSO was reported loss. If one year from December 14, 2005 no advised claim is presented to the company, this certificate will be considered null and void and a new certificate will be issued in lieu thereof.
(PDI - Dec 15. 22 & 29, 2005)

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **LUZON ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY, INC. (LETI)** with plant site at the Gateway Business Park – Special Economic Zone (GBP-SEZ) has filed with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) its application for **PIONEER STATUS** to be granted to its production of optical switches, optical switch modules, and optical switch sub systems based on newness of product and technology, which if approved, will entitle the company to (6) years of Income Tax Holiday. Said application has been officially accepted and is under process in this office.

Any person with valid objections to or pertinent comments on the above-mentioned application may file with the PEZA his/her objections in writing and under oath, within fifteen (15) days from the date of this publication.

Please direct your position papers/comments to the Enterprise Regulations Department of PEZA (Tel. Nos. 551-95-44 and 551-34-57; and telefax 551-3456).

(Sgd.)LILIA B. DE LIMA
Director General

(PDI – Dec. 22, 2005)

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Malacañang
Manila

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 473

TASKING THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) TO PURSUE THE IMMEDIATE EXPLORATION, DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION OF CRUDE OIL FROM THE CAMAGO-MALAMPAYA RESERVOIR

WHEREAS, Article XII, Section 2 of the Constitution declares that all minerals, petroleum and other mineral oils, and other natural resources are owned by the State, and that the exploration, development, and utilization of these resources shall be under the full control and supervision of the State;

WHEREAS, on December 1990, the Republic of the Philippines, represented by the Department of Energy ("DOE"), entered into Service Contract No. 38 ("SC 38"), and engaged the services of a consortium, today composed of Shell Exploration B.V., Shell Philippines LLC, Chevron Malampaya LLC and PNOC-Exploration Corporation, as Contractor for the exploration, development and production of petroleum resources in an identified area offshore northwest of the province of Palawan;

WHEREAS, on 30 April 1998, the DOE and the SC 38 Contractor jointly declared that the petroleum found in the areas designated as the Camago-Malampaya and San Martin reservoirs are in commercial quantity;

WHEREAS, while the Camago-Malampaya Reservoir is known to contain both natural gas and oil resources, the SC 38 Contractor had expressed its position that it cannot undertake the development of the Camago-Malampaya oil leg since, based on its own evaluation, it is not commercially viable;

WHEREAS, oil exploration and production activities need to be urgently conducted in the Camago-Malampaya Reservoir at this time that extracting the volumes of resources from the oil leg is still possible as the conduct of the activity has not yet been significantly undermined by the continued production of natural gas;

WHEREAS, the increasing prices of oil and petroleum products in the world market also has made it urgent and imperative for the Government to aggressively pursue its energy indepedence agenda, including the development and production of domestic oil reserves;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby order;

SECTION 1. ***Lead Agency.*** The DOE, on behalf of the State, is hereby directed to immediately pursue the exploration, development and production of crude or black oil from the Camago-Malampaya Reservoir, respecting the existing rights of the SC 38 Contractor over the area and with paramount consideration of the national interest.

SECTION 2. ***Integrated Assistance.*** The DOE shall undertake the above-mentioned activities through the Philippine National Oil Company ("PNOC"), the government corporation mandated to undertake and transact business relative primarily to oil and petroleum operations, or its subsidiaries.

For this purpose, the DOE and PNOC or its designated subsidiary shall at once commence discussions on and define the terms of service for the exploration, development and production of crude or black oil from the Camago-Malampaya Reservoir.

In defining the terms of service thereof, the DOE and PNOC or its designated subsidiary may consult the SC 38 Contractor with the end in view of optimizing the joint operations of the concerned stakeholders in the production of natural gas and crude or black oil from the Camago-Malampaya Reservoir.

SECTION 3. ***Third Party Participation.*** The PNOC or its designated subsidiary may, if necessary, engage the participation of third parties in the exploration, development and production of the crude or black oil from the Camago-Malampaya Reservoir, subject to existing rights over the area, the requirements of applicable laws, government rules and regulations and prior approval of the DOE.

SECTION 4. ***Reports.*** The DOE shall submit regular reports to the President on the progress of its efforts in the implementation of this Executive Order.

SECTION 5. ***Repealing Clause.*** All other executive issuance, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provision of this Executive Order are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SECTION 6. ***Separability Clause.*** If any section or provision of this Executive Order shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 7. ***Effectivity.*** This Executive Order shall take effect immediately following its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Done in the City of Manila, this 29th day of November, in the year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Five.

Gloria Arroyo

By the President:
MA. MERCEDITAS N. GUTIERREZ
Acting-Executive Secretary

(PDI--Dec. 22, 2005)

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Engr. PACIFICO "PICOY" CABRERA MARAÑA

Beloved Husband, Loving Father, Humble Public Servant

Former OIC Mayor / Vice Mayor of Taal, Batangas
President, Association of Barangay Captains

died Sunday, 18 December 2005
at the age of 79.

His bereaved wife, **Norma Katigbak Villa**; children **Becks** and **Jimmy Z. Galvez Tan**, **Tes**, **Willy** and **Yen**, **Lito** and **Carol**, **Eric**, **Dindo** and **Tintin**, **Joseph** and **Pinky**, **Joan**; sister **Clemencia**; grandchildren and other relatives and friends request for your prayers that his soul may find eternal peace.

His remains lie in state at the family residence at M. Agoncillo Street, Taal, Batangas.

Interment will be on **Friday, 23 December 2005**, at the Family Mausoleum, **Taal Catholic Cemetery** after the 1 pm Requiem Mass at the St. Martin Basilica Taal Cathedral.

'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes
in me will live, even though he dies and whoever
lives and believes in me will never die."
- John 11:25-26

ERLINDA ALMEDA CHIKIAMCO

Peacefully joined her Creator and her loving husband Ramon (†)
on December 21, 2005 at the age of 76.

Her loving children Nina & Mel Dizon, Mimi & Joseph Casadonte, Victoria & Brent (†) Carlton, Andy & Janice Chikiamco; grandchildren Gary & Justin, JR, Andrew, Cristina & Teresa, Josephine & Katrina, Orren & Alfie; sisters & brothers Fredesvinda & David Consunji, Angelita & Felipe Cruz, Zenaida & Simplicio Roxas, Emmanuel (†) & Elsa Almeda, Benjamin Almeda (†), Dominador Almeda Jr. (†), Ermelo Almeda (†) and relatives request the pious readers to pray for her eternal rest and everlasting happiness.

Her body lies in state at Chapel 6 of the Mortuary & Crematory at The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio.

Interment will be on December 24, 2005, Saturday after the 9:00 a.m. funeral Mass at The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio.

Mortuary and Crematory at THE HERITAGE PARK

Our Dearly Beloved

MAGDALENA GALANG RAFANAN

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 19, 2005 at the age of 76.

Her survivors include her children **Jean** and **Boyti**, **Judy** and **Boy**, **Jocelyn** and **Rolly**, **Jacqueline** and **Alexander**, **James** and **Aida**, **Jimmy** and **Arlyn**; her grandchildren **Jessie** and **Joan**, **Jeng Jeng**, **Reynaldo Jr.**, **Janice** and **Prince**, **Rey John**, **Jasmine**, **Vanessa**, **John Michael**, **Troy**, **Jay**, **Aiza Joy**, **John John**, **Jiarjo**; great grandchildren: **Princess**, and sisters **Anita** and **Dorotea**.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels, Guadalupe, Makati City.

Interment will be announced later.

We will miss you Mommy!

Rafael Hubero Asuncion

October 18, 1920 - December 21, 2005

His beloved wife, Fely, children Auri & Robert, Marcia, Gerry & Tess, and Grace graciously thank God for having shared in the life of such a kind and gentle soul.

His body lies in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels, EDSA-Guadalupe. Interment to be announced later.

If the sunset looks extraordinarily glorious tonight, it will be Dad – painting the skies with one last colorful goodbye.

I AM THE
WAY, THE
TRUTH AND
THE LIFE.
NO ONE
COMES TO
THE FATHER
EXCEPT
THROUGH
ME.

JOHN 14:6

Salome Reyes Miranda

Retired Chemistry Professor, U.P. Diliman
Widow of **Bienvenido T. Miranda**

Peacefully joined our Lord at the age of 82 on December 21, 2005 after receiving the Last Sacraments.

Her devoted sister **Maxima** and children, in-laws and grandchildren: **Sara & John Crossley; Ramon; Conrado & Lida** and **John Patrick; Agnes & Ben Castillo** and **Anna, Carlo, Irene**; and **Raul** (+) and **Nicco** request you to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

She lies in state at the Resurrection Chapel, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (Claret Church), Mahinhin St., U.P. Village, Quezon City.

Details of interment will be announced later.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms... I am going there to prepare a place for you." John 14:1-2

CARLO MIGUEL "MIGS" CEPEDA SISON

February 19, 1977 – December 22, 2002

We sadly remember the 3rd death anniversary of **"Migs"**. We also would like to request those whose lives he has touched, to join us in thanking the Lord for his life, reminiscing fond and cherished memories of him.

Bobby and **Marile**
Paolo and **Pauline**, **Giulio**, **Emilio**
Robi and **Angeli**, **Marek**, **Enzo**, **Ruiz**
Gov. Nancy Q. Sison (grandmother)
Sison & Cepeda families

"For God
so loved the
world,
that He
gave His
only
begotten
Son, that
whoever
believes in
Him shall
not perish
but have
everlasting
life."
John 3:16

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Ref No.: PS-05-11-497

Call for Submission of English and Filipino Textbooks and Teacher's Manuals

The Department of Education is inviting interested publishers to submit copies of camera-ready materials for their series of textbooks and accompanying teacher's manuals for:

- English Grades 1 to 6 and First to Fourth Year high school intended for use in public schools nationwide starting SY 2007-2008; and
- Filipino Grades 1 to 6 and First to Fourth Year high school intended for use in public schools nationwide starting SY 2008-2009

All submitted materials will undergo an evaluation process in four levels:

- Level 1 to test completeness of coverage, organization, and internal consistency;
- Level 2 to check accuracy of facts and information, integrity of concepts, and sequence of learning concepts;
- Level 3 to test the appropriateness of the language and visuals used; and
- Level 4 to ensure correct grammar and syntax

The evaluation result will either be for Major Revision or Minor Revision. Content evaluation will not be on a Pass/Fail basis and therefore does not constitute pre-qualification.

Publishers will pay an evaluation fee of **thirty thousand pesos (P30,000.00)** for each set of textbook and teacher's manual for Grades 1 to 2 and **forty thousand pesos (P40,000.00)** for each set of textbook and teacher's manual for Grades 3 to 6 and First to Fourth Year. The evaluation fees, which will be used to defray expenses for service fees, transportation, and board and lodging of evaluators, may be paid either in cash or manager's check.

Publishers will be given a copy of the recommendation of the evaluators at the different levels which will serve as basis for revising the materials prior to submission for bidding. All materials – even those requiring major revisions – may be submitted when bids are tendered as scheduled. Content evaluation under the bidding will then determine the completeness and accuracy of the implementation of the revisions for those recommended for minor revisions. For those recommended with major revisions, the material will undergo the four levels of evaluation

The materials for English and Filipino should be submitted to the DepED-Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS), 5th Floor Mabini Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City starting **January 15, 2006** but not later than **January 20, 2006**.

In order to get a soft copy of the Learning Competencies and the Textbook Call Guidelines, bring a blank compact disk at the DepED-IMCS starting December 27, 2005. For more information, please contact Ms. Daisy Asuncion O. Santos or Ms. Nonie Barraquias at 634-1054 or 631-9294.

For your information and guidance.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. CAMILO MIGUEL MONTESA**
Bids and Awards Committee Chair

(PDI–Dec. 22 & 29, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Agusan del Sur
Municipality of La Paz
BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Municipal Government of La Paz invites all interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the CONSTRUCTION OF TWO (2) STOREY MUNICIPAL HALL BUILDING with an Approved Budget Cost (ABC) of Php 33, 391,331.42.

Only eligible contractors and duly registered with the LGU of La Paz shall be allowed to participate. Prospective bidders must submit their Letter of Intent and other pertinent documents not later than December 26, 2005 at three o' clock in the afternoon. Issuance of Bid documents will be on January 02, 2005 upon payment of non-refundable amount of Php 5,000.00. Pre-bid conference will be on January 16, 2006 at ten o' clock in the morning of the Office of the Municipal Mayor, this Municipality.

Deadline of Submission of duly accomplished Bid / Price Proposals to the Chairman, Bids & Awards Committee shall not be later than ten o'clock in the morning, January 30, 2006. Opening of bids shall commence at two o' clock in the afternoon of the same day.

This Municipal Bids & Awards Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) LITO S. MUNEZ, C.E.
Municipal Administrator / Chairman
Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI - December 15 & 22, 2005)

visit www.jobmarketonline.com

CANON MARKETING (PHILIPPINES), INC.
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Notice of Missing Official Receipts

This is to inform the general public, particularly Canon customers, that the following official receipts of CANON MARKETING (PHILIPPINES), INC., are missing and declared lost:

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Accordingly, CANON MARKETING (PHILIPPINES), INC., will not honor transactions for which the above enumerated official receipts were issued.

(PDI - Dec. 22, 2005)

NFA rice supply assured during the holidays

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr. reiterated the assurance that the country's rice inventory is sufficient to meet the requirements for the staple this coming Christmas season. Tan also said that the price of the agency's well-milled rice will be maintained at the present level of P18 per kg. This is despite the increases in fuel prices and the recent imposition of the expanded value added tax (EVAT). Rice is exempted from the EVAT. The NFA head is also confident of the country's stable rice supply as palay procurement in the countryside, now on the second month of the main harvest, is peaking. Although only 44 percent of the agency's procurement target for last month has been met, it augured well for the farmers as they benefited from the higher farm gate prices being offered by private traders. The NFA, however, is still aggressive in its palay buying activities especially in the heavy palay producing provinces. Tan assured both farmers and consumers that the food agency continues to be vigilant in the implementation of its various programs to ensure the country's food security. For more information regarding the agency's operations and programs, the public may send their inquiries, complaints via the text NFA program through mobile number 0917-6210927.

Natcco, TM partnership bolster m-commerce for coops

TM (THE NEW AND IMPROVED Touch Mobile) and the National Confederation of Cooperatives (Natcco) have joined together to maximize the integration of Globe Telecom's G-Cash m-commerce platform into the latter's diverse grassroots business operations. The partnership is seen to benefit hundreds of thousands of blue-collar workers throughout the country who compose the bulk of the 1,200 primary cooperatives under the Natcco network.

As the official telco brand partner of Natcco, TM facilitates livelihood opportunities in addition to enhancing communication possibilities for blue-collar workers and small and medium-scale entrepreneurs. The adoption of G-Cash as the organization's official platform for mobile business transactions makes the partnership uniquely relevant to its members.

The G-Cash platform, which is facilitated through the use of TM SIMs, enables an efficient, secure, and cost-effective means of loan payment and remittances within the coop network. Natcco members availing of livelihood loans, for instance, can make payments in the form of G-Cash instead of having to travel to the bank.

Natcco chief executive officer Cresente Paez expects the partnership to open up new business opportunities for member cooperatives. "We at Natcco advocate the adoption of new business models such as m-commerce for micro, small, and medium enterprises," he says. "G-Cash extends payment schedules beyond traditional business hours and can reduce losses incurred from overdue loans. The convenience of making mobile payments will allow our members to have more time to attend to their businesses," Paez added.

The partnership with TM also provides Natcco member coops with additional income-generating opportunities, such as retailing of TM products including SIM packs, prepaid reloads, call cards, and phone kits. TM currently offers the lowest texting rates at P1 per message across all networks. It also has Power Call, a service allowing TM to TM calls for just P1 per minute after the first 2 minutes. This latest collaboration also enables Natcco to include Globe AutoloadMAX reloading in its value-added service offerings to member coops.

To further support the organization's objectives, TM has also extended an arrangement with Natcco that makes affordable mobile phone installment plans, also payable through G-Cash, available to the members.

TM head Nonie Busuego noted that the partnership is based on a mutual desire to help lower-income sectors gain access to financial resources and thus foster socio-economic development. "Like Natcco, TM strongly believes in the determination, resilience, and strength of the Filipino masses. Cooperatives serve as powerful means to mobilize them towards helping themselves," Busuego explains. "By providing them with viable and relevant alternative economic models, TM and Natcco continue to empower the people and help them realize their goals," he added.

NIVEA USER WINS A COOL MILLION PESOS IN PROMO

NIVEA
deodorant

Knowing and staying loyal to your brand can definitely give you extra cool rewards. This is exactly what Rico Casapao experienced when he won in Nivea's Deo Want To Be Cool promo. By winning the promo, Rico actually had a choice of getting either a Jaguar X-Type car, a Caribbean cruise for 4 or a million pesos in cash. He chose the cash windfall over the other prizes. Nivea Deodorant's latest offering is Nivea Deo Aqua Cool, a deodorant for men that boosts ones vitality as it provides a great feeling of extra freshness with a cool masculine scent. Other Nivea Deodorant variants include Whitening, Dry and Fresh. All these come in roll on, stick and spray formats. All these provide 24 hour underarm protection. With Nivea Deodorant and a cool million pesos, Rico can certainly look forward to a cool and exciting lifestyle. Shown are Rica King (marketing director), Roselle Cua (assistant brand manager), Rico Casapao (winner), Paulo Lao (national sales manager).

More balikbayans expected to have Lasik surgery during the holidays

"ASIAN EYE INSTITUTE (AEI) IS EXPECTING more balikbayans to have their Lasik surgery in the country during the Christmas season." This was according to Dr. Robert Edward T. Ang, AEI's refractive surgeon who regularly performs laser eye surgery on people who wish to decrease their dependence on glasses or contact lenses because of nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism.

"Because aside from being at par with the laser service and technology offered abroad, balikbayans find it cheaper to have the procedure done here while they're on vacation and in the company of loved ones," he says. "And it really makes sense when you think about it. They accomplish two things at the same time," he adds.

According to him, AEI is ready to accommodate the influx of patients during the holidays. Lasik surgery, as Dr. Ang explains, is the procedure wherein "we change the curvature of the cornea or the front part of the eye using the laser. When you change the curvature you also change the grade so that the patient may have 20-20 vision or better," says the country's only doctor who graduated in two subspecialty programs at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Harvard Medical School (Glaucoma and Cornea and Refractive Surgery).

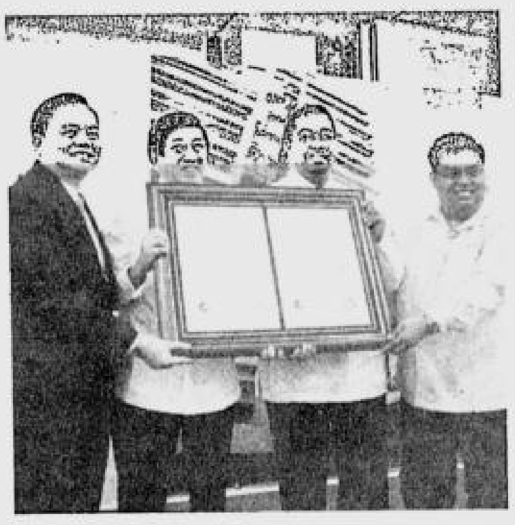
"And anybody who is 20 years old and above with grades of up to 1200 nearsightedness, 500 astigmatism, and up to 500 farsightedness -- or any combination -- can have Lasik surgery after they qualify our thorough screening, which could last as long as three to four hours," he states.

From experience, AEI disqualifies about 8 to 10 percent of patients who have an eye disease that they don't know of, like cataract and glaucoma; patients with thin corneas; and, lastly, if a patient demands more than perfect vision. "There's really no surgery that's 100 percent guaranteed. Our batting average though is around 95 percent. And 90 percent of those patients achieve a 20-20 vision or better," he reports.

Dr. Ang has this advice for balikbayans and their families who are considering having Lasik surgery during the Christmas vacation: "Decide first if you really want this procedure and ask friends and relatives who have had Lasik surgery. Also, as a customer, you have a right to go around and look at all the centers. I don't think the goal is to save on your eyes by finding the cheapest place. You want to be confident in the place and the doctor you chose to operate on your eyes."

For those who want Santa to surprise them this Christmas with the gift of better eyesight, Dr. Ang says to call AEI at 898-2020, e-mail eyehelp@asianeyeinstitute.com, or log on to www.asianeyeinstitute.com for more information.

MANILA'S FIRST AND ONLY ISO CERTIFIED HOSPITAL



Manila Doctors Hospital, Manila's premiere healthcare institution was recently conferred ISO 9000:2001 certification by the AJA Registrars under the accreditation of Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ). This confirmation has given MDH the distinction of being Manila's first and only ISO certified hospital. The institution has just finished undergoing a major renovation wherein all the patients' rooms were refurbished. Additional medical equipment was also installed on the expanded Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Emergency Room (ER) and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). MDH has also finished the construction of the new Doña Salustiana Medical Tower. The new building will house the doctors' clinic and has a parking facility that can accommodate 76 cars. It will also be the new home of several services: Rehabilitation Medicine, Pain Management Clinic, Aesthetic Center, Pro-Health Clinic, Direct Observed Treatment Short (DOTS) Course Clinic and the country's first, Child Neurology and Development Clinic. In the photo are (from left): Aniceto Sobrepeña, president, MDH, Dr. George S.K. Ty, chair, Metrobank, Paul Bagatsing, business development and administrative director, AJA Registrars and Ed Paredes, lead auditor, AJA Registrars.

Pronto to set new trends in auto car care

PRONTO AUTO SERVICES, A NEW car care shop that formally opened Dec 14 in the vicinity of Sucat, Parañaque, will surely cross the boundaries and go beyond offering the usual services of auto care.

Located at Km. 21 West Service Road in Cupang Muntinlupa, Pronto offers a power-packed line of services like wheel alignment, tire and battery checks, brake system check, change oil, tune up, light and heavy body repairs, and car paint. Pronto Auto Services is one of the few shops in the country to combine c ar maintenance with auto detailing. For corporate accounts, it also offers a 24-hour hotline service for towing service including the facilitating of insurance for car accidents.

Pronto's technical facilities are highly modernized including its computerized paint mixer and the machine for wheel alignment. It has a 3000 square meters of floor area that can definitely service a number of cars all at the same time. Its services are based on world-class standard because its technicians were trained abroad and trained by prominent car dealers.

Two fully-airconditioned waiting areas with a billiard table, TVs, and top of the line magazines are made available for clients for their convenience while waiting for their car to get fixed. Amazingly, besides its high-tech facilities, expert technicians, and amenities for leisure, Pronto offers a very competitive pricing scheme, which is 20 percent lower than that of the local car dealers and is competitively priced with the leading repair shops.

Isagani Buenaflor, president of Pronto, envisions that this is going to be a one of a kind car care shop that will offer "progressive maintenance system and mobile diagnostics and repairs and value added services". "Pronto will differentiate itself from the rest of the players with its dependable and fast service and meet all the needs of a motorist. We are not simply offering our services because we guarantee a hassle-free lifestyle for motorists."

Pronto Auto Services is a spin-off from the operations of Budget Car and Truck Rental to further improve its efficiency in delivering value added customer service to its corporate clients. Pronto is a subsidiary of Diamond IGB Inc, which also owns the local franchise of Budget Car & Truck Rental.

Pronto a Spanish word, which means fast and the new auto car care shop assures the motoring public to live up to its name.

Happy 50th Anniversary!!!
UP Sigma Beta Sorority
Los Baños Chapter

IN THE BUSINESS OF GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

The UP Sigma Beta Sorority Los Baños chapter has been in the business of giving back to the community for the past fifty years. Medical-Dental missions to the indigents, building lecture halls to develop excellence in students, scholarship grants and many more. Shown are some of the members taking time out for a break to celebrate the 50th anniversary. The Chapter culminates celebration of its golden anniversary in a special Betan Family Day on Dec. 28. All UPLB Sigma Betans are invited to attend.

Bits Clips

Dr. P welcomes the New Year with the whole family

CELEBRATE THE YEAR TO COME IN COMFORT with Dr. P diapers! Dr. P lets you forget about your worries so you can smile for another year of love and happiness with the family. Dr. P prevents growth of harmful germs with its anti-bacteria action. It also has Active Channels that actively distribute liquid across the pad so it does not stay in one place. And its Wetness Indicator will signal the right time to change diapers. Dr. P provides utmost protection and comfort for our loved ones in this season of lights, love, and happiness. Dr. P is available in leading supermarkets, groceries and drugstores nationwide.

'Christmasterpiece' photo contest by Lady's Choice

AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS now have a chance to create their own masterpieces symbolizing the joys of the Holiday season through the Lady's Choice "Christmasterpiece" photo contest. The contest is open to amateur, professional and media photographers. Their entries should center on the theme "Bayanihang Pasko" - reflective of the Filipino traditions of volunteerism and and helping one another in order to achieve the true meaning of the Christmas season. They can send as many entries as they want, with each entry accompanied by one new Lady's Choice bottle label of any size and variant. Entries must be in full color, can be analog (must be printed on at least size 8R glossy paper, and must be submitted along with the negatives) or digital (also in size 8R at a minimum of 300 dpi submitted in CD). Photojournalists entries must be accompanied by proof of publication from local, regional or national papers. At stake for the Open Category (amateur and professional) are P20,000 in cash plus Lady's Choice products for the first prize winner; P10,000 in cash and Lady's Choice products to the second prize winner; and P5,000 in cash and Lady's Choice products to the third prize winner. For the Media category, winners of the first, second and third prizes will receive P20,000, P10,000 and P5,000, respectively, plus Lady's Choice products. Their editors will also receive P10,000 for the first prize winner, P5,000 for second prize, and P2,000 for the third prize. Those interested may send their entries to CEMG office, Unit 7B Vernida 1 Bldg., #120 Amorsolo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City on or before Jan. 15, 2006.

Monterey Xmas promo

FOR MANY FILIPINOS, THE Christmas table is not complete without holiday meats and the Quezo de Bola. So from Dec. 1 to 31, every P2,500 worth of Monterey products purchased through myAyala.com entitles the buyer to a free 500 gram Magnolia Quezo de Bola. This season, prepare succulent meat dishes by buying pork, beef and lamb cuts only from Monterey. For worry-free, impromptu Christmas gatherings, serve Monterey pre-marinated and ready-to-cook meats. And if you're too busy getting the house ready for the holidays, you can have Monterey products delivered to your doorstep by simply dialing 633-MEAT (6328). 'Tis the season to be jolly – buy Monterey meats today and enjoy your free Magnolia Quezo de Bola!

Sony Ericsson's Walkman phone online contest

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESSFUL 'WALKMAN Phones 100' online poll of the world's top 100 songs of all time, Sony Ericsson's new 'Let's Play Win a W800i' online contest gives music fans across the globe yet another chance to win a Sony Ericsson W800i Walkman phone. To join, simply log on to www.sonyericsson.com/letsplay/ph answer three questions about Sony Ericsson correctly, complete the tie-breaker, and register to be officially entered into the contest. The entry with the most original answer to the tie-breaker question will be declared as the winner of a brand new W800i. The 'Let's Play Win a W800i' contest runs from now until Jan. 31, 2006.

'Goldilocks Handa Line'

CONSTANT CRAVINGS FOR GOLDILOCKS GOODIES can now be satisfied by dialing the Goldilocks Handa Line 888-1-999. It will surely be an advanced Christmas gift for those yearning for their favorite food and bakeshop products, with the hassle-free benefit of fast delivery service. All your favorite desserts, premium cakes, rolls, gift boxes, and menu items are now just a phone call away. Apart from individual appetites, the Handa Line 888-1-999 is also the most convenient way for party hosts to serve delicious food during sizeable gatherings. The Goldilocks Party Fun-Feast packages are perfect for delivery, so that party planners can avoid the effort of handling large orders.

ProductFILES

12 Days of Pillsbury Christmas

- On the first day of Christmas, I decided to surprise my family with Jam Drop Cookies made out of Pillsbury One-Step Cookies - Jam Drops. Were they pleasantly surprised!
- On the second day of Christmas, I was thinking of what I could give my neighbors for Christmas. I want to give them something affordable and something that their entire family would share and enjoy. This year, they will all get to enjoy my chewy rocky road brownies. Thanks to Pillsbury Thick and Fudgy Deluxe Walnut Brownie Mix.
- On the third day of Christmas, my husband wanted to give his staff a treat. I decided I would make them my tried-and- tested puto using Pillsbury One-Step Puto. My husband told me some people were asking him where he bought it.
- On the fourth day of Christmas, our village was having its annual Christmas bazaar. I wanted to give it a shot and bring out the entrepreneur in me by selling loaves and slices of rum cake using Pillsbury Moist Supreme Yellow Cake Mix. My rum cakes were sold out!
- On the fifth day of Christmas, I was going to have a potluck dinner with some of my old friends from college. I willingly volunteered to bring dessert. I was confident that they would love my moist banana cake made with Pillsbury Pinoy Fiesta Banana Cake Mix. They loved it, and couldn't believe that I simply used a toaster to bake it.
- On the sixth day of Christmas, my daughter was asking me what she could bring to their school's Christmas party. So I whipped up my family's favorite crema de fruta using Pillsbury Pinoy Fiesta Butter Recipe Chiffon Cake Mix. And what do you know, Danica came home from school telling me that her teacher loved it.
- On the seventh day of Christmas, a group of carolers were scheduled to serenade our family with their beautiful Christmas songs. I decided to serve them bibingka using Pillsbury Bibingka Mix. After eating one slice, all of them decided to ask for an encore.
- On the eighth day of Christmas, my kids wanted to give Santa a treat. So we decided to bake him some of those heavenly triple chocolate cookies with Pillsbury One-Step Triple Chocolate Cookies. My kids were sure Santa would love this treat.
- On the ninth day of Christmas, my husband was so tired and cranky complaining about the Christmas traffic. So I decided to cheer him up with his favorite strawberry shortcake made with Pillsbury One-Step Flavored Strawberry Hotcake Mix. Mr. Tired and Cranky became Mr. Energized and Happy.
- On the tenth day of Christmas, my family and I came home from a dinner but my kids were still feeling hungry, craving for some sweets.

Pillsbury One-Step Crinkles to the rescue! I was able to bake my kids chocolate crinkles in a jiffy.

- On the eleventh day of Christmas, I was running out of time but was still short on gifts for my relatives. Thanks to Pillsbury's One-Step Pandan Hot Cake Mix, I can now give them a gift that will give them a "taste" of how much I really love them with my buko pandan macaroons.

- On the twelfth day of Christmas, I decided to surprise my family by telling them I would make leche flan. Since I have never done leche flan before, they thought I would spend hours in the kitchen just to do this. Little did they know that I was using the new Pillsbury One-Step Leche Flan. It was so easy to do! I just added milk to the mix, which already included the syrup, and steamed. In less than 30 minutes, I was out of the kitchen and in less than 30 minutes also, the leche flan disappeared from the dining table. My husband and kids really enjoyed it and they thought I did the flan the old-fashioned way. I just smiled when they asked me how I got it right the first time around.

M-commerce boosts rural micro-entrepreneurship

RURAL ENTREPRENEURS CAN NOW reap the same m-commerce benefits their urban counterparts enjoy, with the recent collaboration between Globe G-Cash, the world's first wireless and cardless mobile payments platform, and the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines (RBAP). Dubbed Text-a-Payment, the service allows registered borrowers to pay for their monthly loan amortizations via text.

The service provides inexpensive, accessible and reliable micro-financing opportunities for rural bank clients and other low-income households who may have little or no access to financial services, while enhancing existing banking practices at no additional infrastructure cost. By enabling borrowers to simply text in their loan payments, the service promotes both direct cost and opportunity savings, since borrowers no longer have to travel long distances and spend a lot of time doing bank transactions. RBAP Text-a-Payment also facilitates automated transaction processing, thereby decreasing the partner bank's back office costs, while allowing banks' access to clients consisting of Globe and TM's combined 12-million subscriber base. Better efficiency and savings ultimately translate to reduced interest rates and service fees for RBAP member-bank clients.

RBAP Text-a-Payment was recently launched through a series of nationwide workshops facilitated by G-Xchange Inc. the wholly-owned Globe subsidiary tasked to oversee the development of G-Cash, and RBAP, through the Rural Bankers Research and Development Foundation Inc (RBRDFI) together with USAID supported Microenterprise Access to Banking Services (MABS) Program. To date, 161 participants from 97 banks in Dipolog, Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Manila, Iloilo and Cebu, have learned about the proper uses and benefits of RBAP, as well as other G-Cash functionalities like retail purchases, utilities payments, prepaid reloading, phone-to-phone transfer of cash values, and domestic and international remittances.

Workshop participants have been vocal about their enthusiasm for this mobile micro-financing innovation. Benedict Romuald Tudtud, a member of the Board of Directors of the Rural Bank of Mandaue, Inc. says, "We're looking forward to implementing RBAP Text-a-Payment because it reduces costs, eliminates cash-in-transit risk, and brings direct cost savings to our clients." On the other hand, Rustica Comia, President of Classic Rural Bank Inc of Batangas City is interested in taking full advantage of the G-Cash m-commerce platform in servicing their client base.

"Rural entrepreneurs, such as our clients in over 40 barangays, will definitely benefit from the advantages of m-commerce," she noted.

RBAP Text-a-Payment training-workshops are also scheduled to be conducted in San Fernando, Pampanga, Santiago, Isabela, Naga, Manila and San Fernando, La Union.

CHILD LABORERS TREATED TO TWO DAYS OF FUN AT DREAMSCAPE

The holiday season came early at Robinsons Galleria's Dreamscape as JG Summit Inc recently treated victims of child labor to two whole days of fun and gifts, in support of GMA Kapuso Foundation's Give-a-Gift project. Attended by GMA broadcast journalist Mel Tiangco and URC president and CEO Lance Gokongwei, the affair held at Dreamscape treated the kids to two whole days of fun and kiddie frivolity, replete with big bags of goodies, party games, story-telling with their new friends from The Children's Library, interactive playtime with MiniStop mascots Minnie and Topper, delicious treats and merienda from MiniStop and Hot Loops, and performances by GMA's Pinoy Pop Superstars like Jonalyn Viray. The kids even got to hop on the kiddie rides with the stars of GMA-7 like Starstruck's Krizzy Jareño.

BALI BLENDS CAFÉ OPENS AT SM MEGA STRIP

Bali Blends Café, 'where paradise is just a cup away', the Indonesian inspired café opened up at SM Mega Strip Building A last Dec. 2. Bali Blends Café is the brainchild of Rika Kato, a 21 year old entrepreneur and a fresh graduate of Assumption College. Bali Blends Café offers the best coffee in town coming from Indonesia where the best coffee beans come from and one of the largest producers of coffee beans in the world. Apart from coffee, Bali Blends Café serves authentic Indonesian food. Very soon Bali Blends Café will also serve breakfast. The ribbon cutting ceremony was graced by Remy Ortiz-Bicomong, James Wang, Rita Kato, owner and and the brains behind Bali Blends Café, Maila Sonja Tahar, Minister Counselor of Indonesian Embassy and Dr. Renzie Padernal.

How to beat that 'holiday hangover'

IF YOU'RE A TYPICAL CHRISTMAS SHOPper, chances are you're quite familiar with the condition called "holiday hangover." It's that run down feeling that takes over every year when the merriment is done and you realize you've gone over your budget and mounds of bills have collected on your desk.

In line with its current campaign to encourage financial prudence among consumers, Bankard, a pioneer in the credit card industry, shares a few simple tips to beat the urge to splurge and be a wise shopper.

First, set a budget and stick to it. Figure out how much you can realistically afford to set aside towards holiday gift giving, without going into debt. If you plan to use a credit card, just determine the total amount you can realistically pay back in full within two months.

List your gift recipients. Include costs for wrapping, cards, postage, decorations, etc. If the total exceeds your allocated budget, start deleting or revising your list until the budget covers expenses. On all your shopping trips, keep this list with you to help you resist impulse buying.

Shop as early as possible, and shop alone. If you shop with a friend, you're bound to spend more money, even more if you shop with children. Also, don't wait until the last minute, so you'll have time to comparison shop. And once you've ticked off a purchase from your list, leave the store quickly. The longer you linger, the greater the temptation for impulse buying.

Preferably, use the right credit card for your Christmas purchases. Bankard, a pioneer in the credit card industry, has long been advocating consumers to see the wisdom of using its myDream JCB card because of its low effective monthly interest rate of only 2.5 percent. It also has equally low installment interest rates and low annual fee of only P800, the lowest among all international card brands.

This shopping season is the perfect time to see just how ideal the myDream JCB card is. Bankard has designed it as a truly no-frills, easy-to-maintain credit card that's relevant to these times. Use it wisely to help you avoid that nagging feeling that you've overspent on your holiday gifts, be in control of your finances, and prevent that holiday hangover.

To apply for a myDream JCB or request for balance transfer, just call the myDream JCB Customer Hotline at tel. no. 888-1818 (within Metro Manila) or 1-800-10-888-1818 (outside Metro Manila).

Diagnostics centers campaign for adult vaccination

SEEING THE IMPORTANCE OF protection against vaccine-preventable diseases in their respective communities, four more laboratories and diagnostics centers have intensified efforts to create awareness about the importance of vaccination as a preventive measure.

Strategically located within malls and communities in Metro Manila, these clinics and their branches – namely MedCentral Medical Clinics and Diagnostics Center, Sta. Lucia Healthcare, Best Diagnostics and Hi Precision Diagnostics Inc. – are accessible for patients to obtain a wide range of hospital products and services, including vaccination.

Among the vaccine preventable diseases that adults should be on the lookout for are polio, measles, mumps, rubella or German measles, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid fever, chicken pox, meningococcal meningitis and influenza. Frequent travelers will also find it practical to inquire about the kind of vaccines they may need prior to traveling to an intended destination.

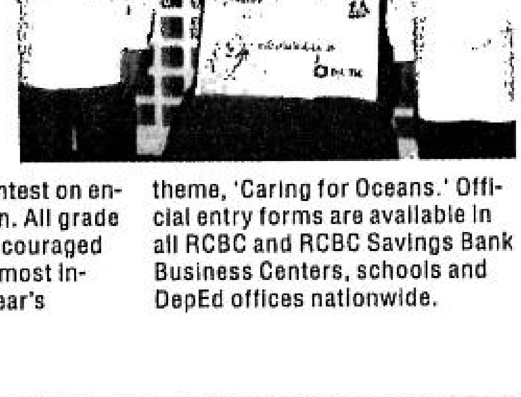
The four institutions are among the latest that GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) is supporting with an Adult Vaccination program that aims to educate adults on the value of protection from diseases through vaccination.

Doctors are likewise optimistic that through the partnership, the incidence of contagious but vaccine-preventable diseases will be reduced in the respective communities where the clinics and their branches are located. This also presents an opportunity to serve patients better in their desire to deliver quality healthcare services.

For more information about vaccines, consult your doctor or visit the nearest branch of MedCentral, Sta. Lucia, Best Diagnostics and Hi Precision clinics.

DROP UR CARD, WIN A CELLPHONE PROMO WINNER

St. Francis Square Tiangge Mall, the newest shopping destination in the heart of Ortigas Commercial Center recently award a Nokia 6610i to Josephine Francisco (right) of Wyeth Phils Inc, the first lucky winner of the Drop Ur Card, Win a Cellphone promo. Presenting the award is Louie Ventosa (left) head, ads and promo and Joyce Jiro (middle), PR assistant.



RCBC LAUNCHES 12TH KKKK

RCBC president and COO Francisco S. Magsajo Jr. (left) and RCBC executive vice chair and CEO Rizalino S. Navarro led the unveiling of the poster marking the launch of the bank's 12th Kwentong Kalikasan Katha ng Kabataan, a nationwide short story writing contest on environmental protection. All grade school children are encouraged to join and write their most inspiring tales on this year's theme, 'Caring for Oceans.' Official entry forms are available in all RCBC and RCBC Savings Bank Business Centers, schools and DepEd offices nationwide.

Product FILES

Oishi's popular Xmas treat

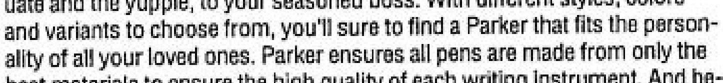
LAST YEAR'S POPULAR CHRISTMAS TREAT IS back! Oishi has put together our favorite snacks in a festive Christmas bag that brightens up the season. The Oishi Cuckoo Bag has cool, fun collectibles inside each bag. You'll find an inflatable pillow, a deck of Cuckoo playing cards, a soap dispenser, a toothbrush holder, or a bath lily among your favorite Oishi goodies. With a price of P86 (may vary per supermarket), the Oishi Cuckoo Bag is very affordable. Now available at all Metro Manila branches of Robinson's Supermarkets, Puregold Price Club, Watson's, Rustan's, SM Supermarkets, Waltermart, South Supermarket, among others. Hurry while supply Lasts.

Flaunt your figure with Nesvita Pro-digestion

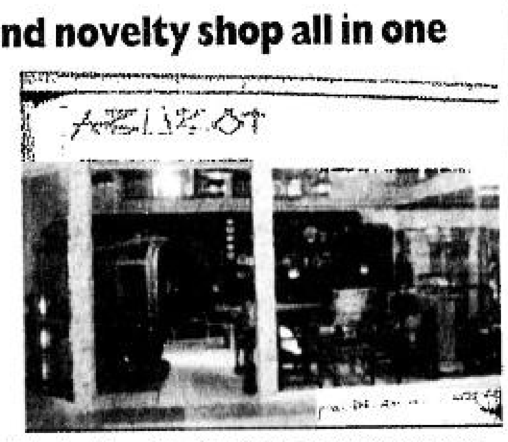
NESVITA PRO-DIGESTION WITH ACTIFIBRAS is the only milk in the market that helps smoothen digestion and results to a flatter tummy and a slim, healthy body. Actifibras are unique blends of soluble dietary fiber, calcium and anti-oxidants especially developed by Nestle to help cleanse the digestive system with less bloating, manage weight and keep the skin youthful and toned. With a regular workout and a glass of Nesvita Pro-Digestion taken regularly everyday, modern day Eves breathe life into a body-to-die-for, transforming her into a beautifully-fit, and confident woman noticeable in any crowd. Nesvita Pro-Digestion is available in the 180g box and 25g stick packs.

Looking for the perfect gift!

WHEN GIVING A CHRISTMAS PRESENT, IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO BUY JUST something. And nothing else can be a perfect gift but a Parker pen. Sophisticated, modern pens that write as good as they look. Parker has a wide range of beautifully crafted pens that suit every person - from the new graduate and the yuppie, to your seasoned boss. With different styles, colors and variants to choose from, you'll sure to find a Parker that fits the personality of all your loved ones. Parker ensures all pens are made from only the best materials to ensure the high quality of each writing instrument. And because of its reasonable price, you would not have to worry about budget constraints when shopping for the finest Holiday gifts.



A specialty and novelty shop all in one



ABUBOT IS A SPEcialty and novelty shop designed as a home boutique that offers an exquisite collection of home decors, accessories and finely-crafted furniture. Their selection of beautiful pieces will surely bring delight to avid home enthusiasts and homemakers alike. Abubot's wide variety of home decor and furniture are distinctly different from one another, which makes the pieces all the more unique. Abubot's first store opened in Market! Market! in Taguig and was soon followed by another branch in Frontera Verde Tinedesitas in Pasig City. Now on its third store in SM City North Edsa, Abubot continues to delight and please the hearts of those collectors that surely cannot be satisfied by just a few pieces alone.

GMA COMMENDS FINEX WORLD CONFAB ORGANIZER

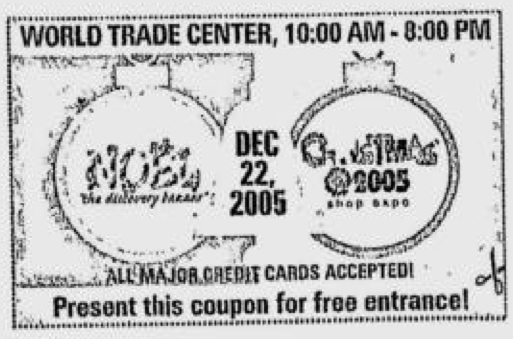
President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo extended her felicitations to Edgardo L. Limon, over-all chair of the 2005 World Congress of Financial Executives during the courtesy call of heads of foreign delegations in Malacañang. This Congress which was organized by the IAFEI and Finex and is the 36th Congress had the biggest number of attendees in the history of IAFEI. Shown in photo are Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Congresswoman Amelita C. Villarosa of Occidental Mindoro and IAFEI executive director Karl-Heinz Midunsky.

DREAM CONCERT AT CAFÉ FONTANA

It's no longer a dream but a reality - Café Fontana at Grand Boulevard Hotel opened its doors to a great event with its partner, Winston Cigarettes last Nov. 30. The event was dubbed Winston's Overdrive on a Silk Road, featuring the smoothest of rock classics by the 'Overdrive' Band and other hits from the 80's by 'Silk' Band. Overdrive and Silk bands performed against a backdrop of the Manila Bay skyline, interestingly illuminated by the colorful lights along Roxas Boulevard. The coffee-shop-turned concert venue, cozy and sophisticatedly charming. definitely served as a fantastic party place for event fund raisers such as high school batches '82 Ateneo de Manila University and St. Scholastica's College Manila and St. Scholastica's Alumnae Centennial Foundation. This successful event was made possible by Winston and Grand Boulevard Hotel, the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (Pagcor), The Travel Mart, Colt Ice, FM Radio Station Magic 89.9 and Globe.

THE FARM AND COUNTRY RESORT FOR ALL SEASONS

Situated at serene Lipa, Batangas, La Finca allows its residents to plant and harvest profitable vegetable crops at their lots, should they choose to build a house at a later date. La Finca has been the venue for some memorable gatherings. Recently, it was the venue for the 'Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace' event. Shown at the event were (from left): Supreme Court Justice Consuelo Ynares Santiago, Babot Oreta, Bishop Ramon Arguelles, Amparo Aspiras, Deedee Siytangco and Babes Oreta. For further details about La Finca , call 889-8588, 889-9999 or fax at 844-4532 or visit www.lafinca.com.ph.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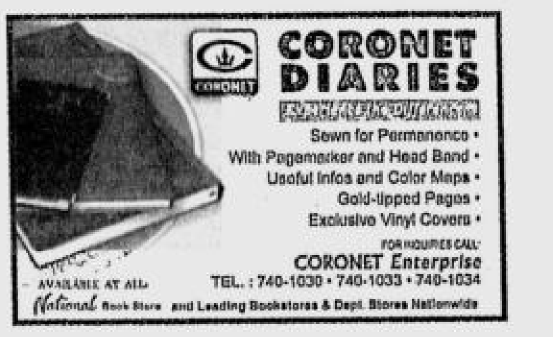
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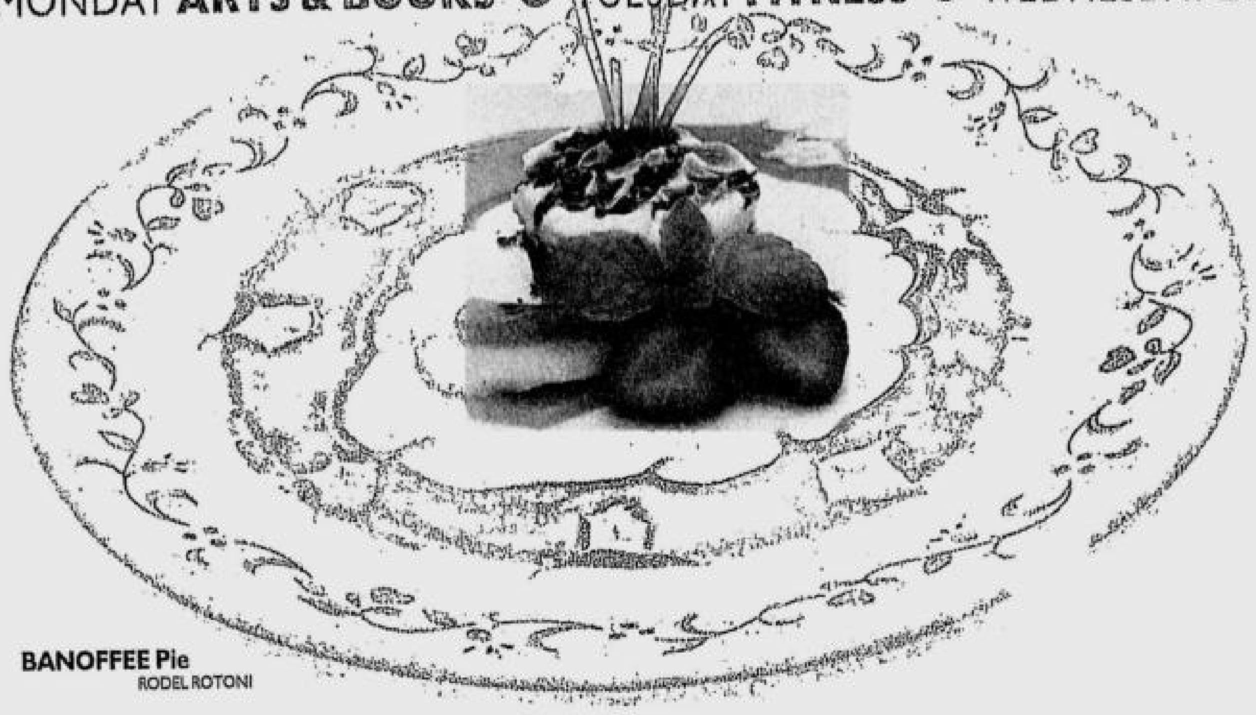
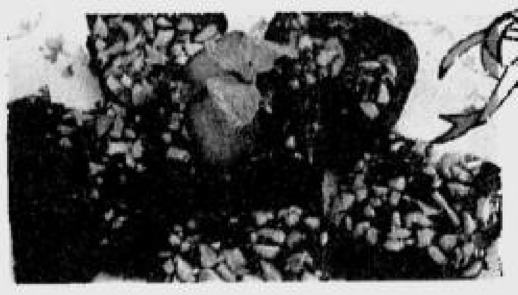

BANOFFEE Pie
RODEL ROTONI

Del Monte eases up the stressful cooking season with quality quickie recipes


DEL Monte Light Syrup gives brownies that extra shine.

Holiday treats in a snap

By Vangie Baga-Reyes

BIG, DELICIOUS IDEAS MAY require just a little effort.

In this season of celebrations, your festive preparations need not be complicated. You can have a wonderful, impressive holiday spread by using products that will shorten preparation time without sacrificing taste, flavor, texture and aroma.

With convenience and practicality in mind, Del Monte has recently launched instant, easy-to-use baking essentials and party drinks to make your get-together meaningful as you spend less in the kitchen and more time with your loved ones.

Del Monte's Instant Piña Filling, Banana Purée, All-Purpose Light Syrup and Maple Syrup are especially formulated for ease of use and shorter preparation time. Made from natural ingredients, the products are healthier alternatives to artificial flavorings.

For pineapple-based baked delights, Del Monte Instant Piña Filling can be used as is or as base filling. No need to peel, slice or chop. Simply pour the pineapple filling onto the pie crust, top with strips of pie crust and you're ready to bake.

Del Monte Banana Purée is made from fresh Cavendish bananas to preserve its tang and aroma even if combined with other ingredients. It is sugar-free, thus ideal for diabetics and weight watchers.

"Bananas and pineapples are among the most versatile and most readily available tropical fruits in the country," says Angelita Adriano-Castillo, Del Monte's group product manager.

The Del Monte All-Purpose Light Syrup helps create more stable, smoother icing on cakes, rolls and cupcakes while making bars, cookies and fudges moist and chewy.

With the taste and smell of real maple, the Del Monte Maple Syrup provides the perfect finishing touch for pancakes, cookies and pecan pie. It has the right combination of sweetness and thickness for many baked products.

Party drinks

In time for the holidays, Del Monte has also introduced new ways to spice up the party season with versatile, easy-to-use non-alcoholic party drink mixes.

The Piña Colada, Piña Margarita and Cool Mary (Del Monte's version of the Bloody Mary) do not have the tang of alcohol. You only have to shake, pour and serve to get the drink you want.

Castillo says, "Each is made from natural ingredients and has 100-percent RDA (recommended daily allowance) for Vitamin C."

Del Monte Piña Colada has real coco flavor and pineapple bits; the all-natural, unsweetened Del Monte Piña Margarita mix has real pineapple bits; and the Del Monte Cool Mary is made of thick tomato juice rich in lycopene and potassium.

Complementing the drinks are cocktail syrups like Del Monte's Strawberry Margarita Syrup, which is great for smoothies, Grenadine Syrup and blue Pomegranate-flavored Syrup.

Prepare your favorite cocktails in a snap. Here are easy cocktail recipes that are sure to be the buzz of your Christmas party, as well as your favorite desserts that will look great on your table. Guests will never guess just how easily your elegant spread came together.

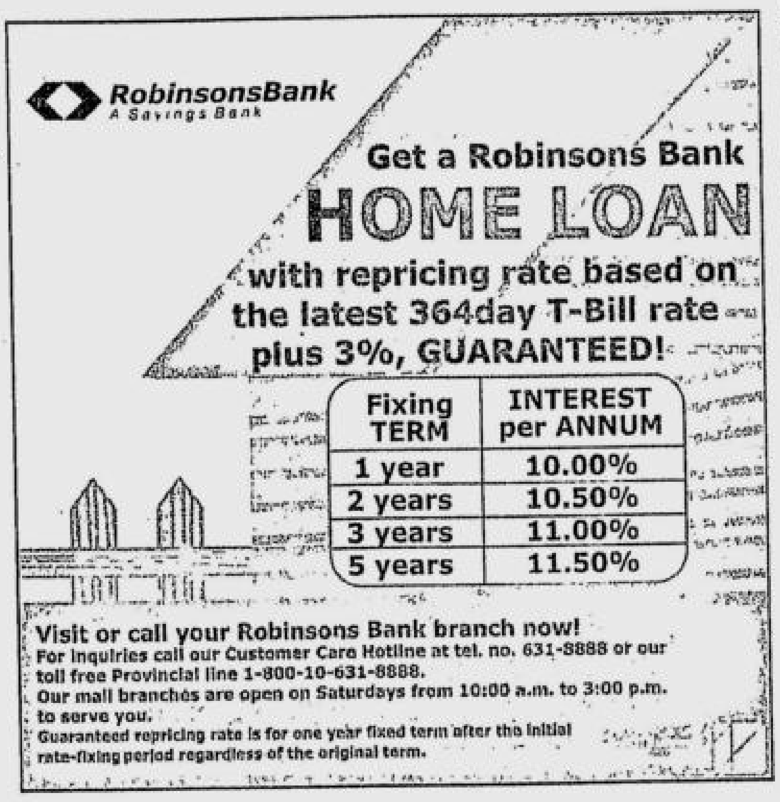
Sapphire Twist

1 can (24 cl) Del Monte Lychee Twist 202
1 tbsp Del Monte Pomegranate-Flavored Syrup
1 scoop crushed ice

Blend all ingredients until frothy. Pour into a glass. Garnish and serve.

HOLIDAY/ C3

SAPPHIRE Twist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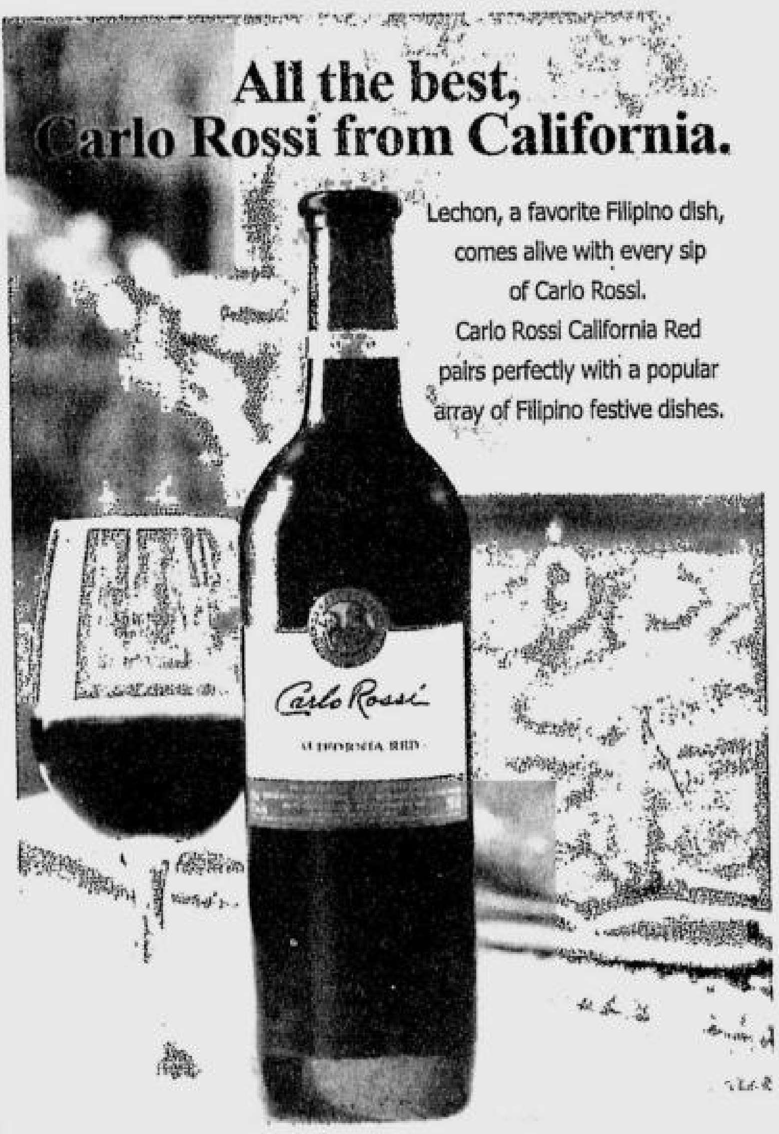
All the best, Carlo Rossi from California.
Lechon, a favorite Filipino dish, comes alive with every sip of Carlo Rossi.
Carlo Rossi California Red pairs perfectly with a popular array of Filipino festive dishes.

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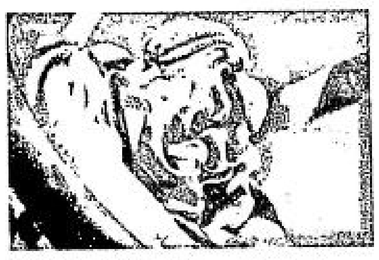
A COUNTRY Christmas celebration at Discovery Country Suites

Traditional Christmas spread

DINING OUT

THE INTERCONTINENTAL Manila's Prince Albert Rotiserrie will serve Christmas Eve dinner and Christmas Day lunch for only P1,950+ per person. Café Jeepney will serve buffet for P1,100+ per person for dinner on Christmas Eve and lunch on Christmas Day. *Bibingka* and *puto bumbong* are served at the café 7 a.m.-9 p.m., until Dec. 24; and 10 a.m.-9 p.m., Dec. 25-30. Christmas goodies are sold at The Jeepney Deli Shop until Jan. 9. Call 8159711 or visit the Holiday Desk at the hotel lobby.

CHEF David Pardo de Ayala has a Christmas specialty menu featuring Curried New Zealand Monkfish and Herb-roasted Pork Loin Medallion at restaurant Verbena in Discovery Country Suites Tagaytay. The set menu is available all throughout December at P850+ per person. Guests can also enjoy wine and cheese spread 5:30-6:30 p.m., Dec. 23-24. Buffet Wine and Cheese is available daily at P495+ per person. Discovery Country Suites Tagaytay is located at 300 Calamba Road, San Jose, Tagaytay City. Call (46)4134567 or 6838383.



HAVE A SIP of Metro Phi Resto Bar's African Jeweled Coffee, this month's featured cocktail. Metro Phi Resto Bar is located at Metrowalk Commercial Complex, Meralco Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Call 6388896 or 6872758.

SULO Hotel's Café Paraiso and Lobby Lounge present a buffet featuring all-time favorite Christmas dishes, such as *kare-kare, kalderetang kambing* and *lumpiang sariwa*. Call 9245051 to 71.

CAFÉ Berrio of Discovery Suites offers "A Christmas Culinary Carol" plated menu for lunch and dinner until Dec. 31 for only P650+ per person. Call 6838222.

THE BELLEVUE Hotel offers different kinds of roast. Choose from Sugar-glazed Ham, Roast Tom Turkey with stuffing or Roast Australian Prime Rib for roasting (available by kilo). Call 7718181.

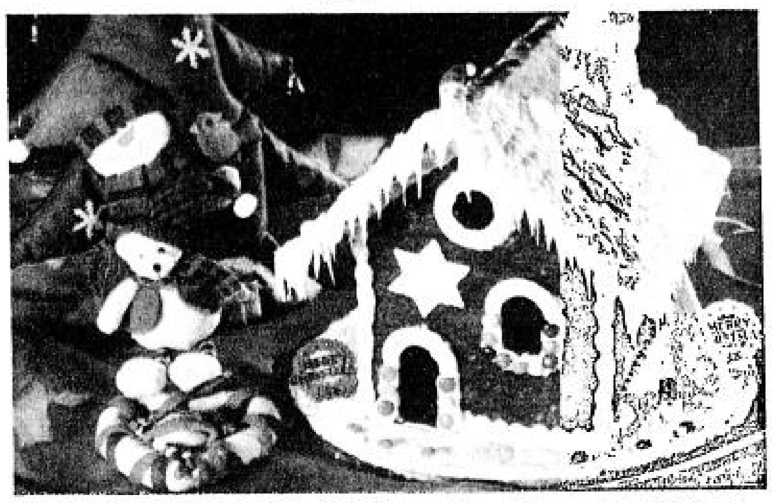
THE RICHMONDE Hotel's Grill serves Christmas Eve dinner and Christmas Day lunch buffets at P900+ per person. On New Year's Eve, the Grill will have a dinner buffet of international dishes at P950+ per person. Call 6387777 loc. 3409.

CHILI'S Bar and Grill in Makati celebrates its 9th anniversary with a special dessert blowout for diners until Dec. 31. Customers who order food and drinks worth at least P750 get Chili's Molten Chocolate Cake for P99 instead of the usual P325. A new menu offers "Asian Flavors" including beef ribs and salmon. Chili's other branches are on Tomas Morato, Quezon City and Connecticut Street in Greenhills.

BURGOO showcases its bestsellers like Oklahoma-style Grilled Baby Back Ribs, Seafood Caesar Salad, Lemon-Peppered Grilled Lapulapu, Grilled Pork Chops, Country-style Fried Chicken, Supreme Pizza, Seafood Linguini this holiday season.
You can also enjoy your favorite items by calling 8981815/16. Burgoo branches are at 210 Tomas Morato Extension, South Triangle, Diliman, Quezon City; 2/L The Podium, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City; 3/L Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City; The Promenade in Greenhills, San Juan; and 3/L Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, Quezon City. Call 9277424, 6875254, 7264663 or 9136112.

Noche Buena to go

CASA ARMAS HAS COME UP with holiday takeout packages. House specialties like Cochinillo (roast suckling pig), any kind of Paella, Cangrejos (Thanlong-style king crab), or house specialty Asado de Pollo en Su Jugo (roast chicken), all in convenient takeout packaging. The restaurant will also be open for Noche Buena and Media Noché family get-togethers on Dec. 24 and 31. Visit Taberna de Casa Armas, 2/F Paseo Center, Paseo de Roxas Avenue cor. Sedeno Street; Casa Armas, 3/L Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center (7574961); and 132 Jupiter St., Bel-Air Village (8973542), all in Makati City; and The Podium, 18 ADB Ave. Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City (6873663).



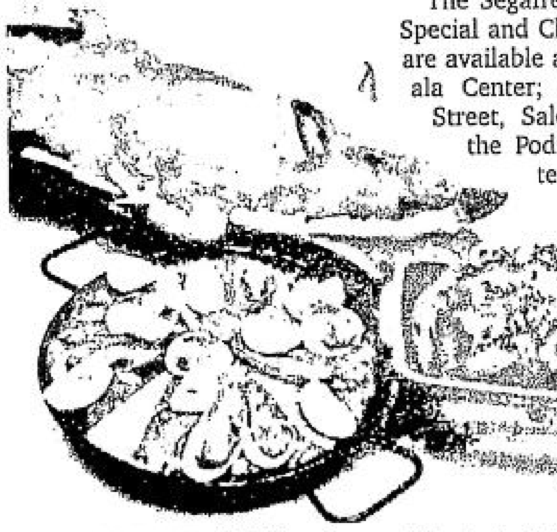
INTERCONTINENTAL Manila's Ginger Bread House is available at The Jeepney Deli Shop.

ILUSTRADO Christmas Tienda makes available house specialties for take-home treats and for gift-giving: Paella Ilustrado, Paella Marinara, Chicken Paella, Callos Madrileña, Chicken Relleno, Lengua con Setas, Roast Stuffed Turkey. The deli section and Pasteleria Ilustrado offers *bibingka* and *puto bumbong*, with ginger tea or hot chocolate, are available 12 noon-7 p.m. Ilustrado is at 744 Calle Real del Palacio, Intramuros, Manila. Call 5273674 to 75.

SEGAFREDO Zanetti Espresso Bar, the home of authentic Italian espresso, has a special Christmas offering until Dec. 31. For a minimum order of P500 per single receipt, customers may draw a holiday gift from a fishbowl. The array of gifts includes Segafredo Intermezzo coffee packs, Magnolia ice cream cakes, Espa-Fil canned goods, wines from Wine Direct, San Miguel mugs and T-shirts, liqueur from Diageo, Jules Destrooper Belgian wafers and butter biscuits, cheddar cheese, Aggy's cakes, Hallmark greeting cards, Fil-Fresh schueblig sausages, Tork notebooks and ballpens, and Maxxium Singapore Liqueurs.

Coffee-lovers may want to check out Christmas gifts items available at Segafredo: P100 gift cheques, Intermezzo espresso gift packs and food gifts of Almond Snowballs and rum balls.

The Segafredo "Buon Natale" Special and Christmas gift items are available at Greenbelt 2, Ayala Center; Liberty at Valero Street, Salcedo Village; and the Podium, Ortigas Center.

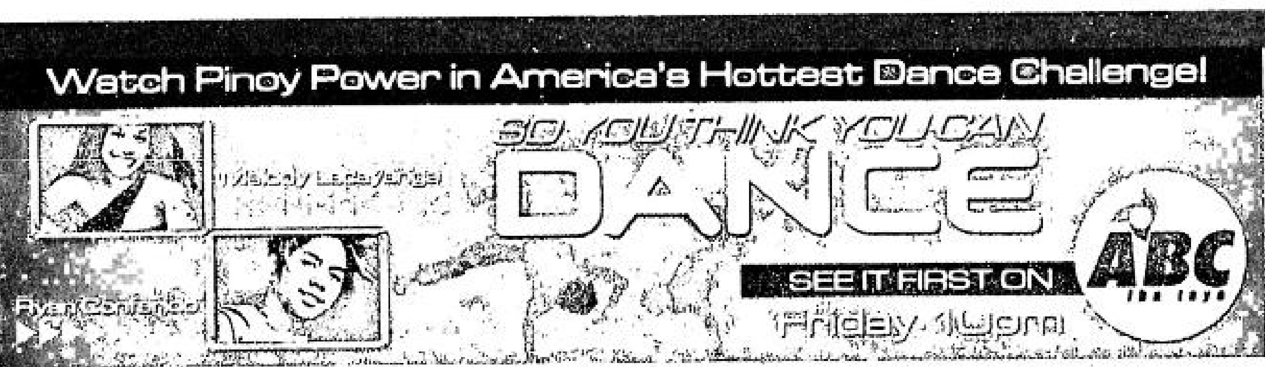


COCHINILLO, Paella Valenciana and Asado de Pollo en Su Jugo from Casa Armas

SUPER Bowl of China's Deep Fried Wanton (Dim Sum Party Platters)

SUPERBOWL of China offers Chinese Christmas Cheer promotion. Until Jan. 10, the restaurant will make available Dim Sum Party Platters and Super Servings in special packages suitable for potluck holiday gatherings. Selected Super Bowl dishes are also available in executive food packs for as low as P200 per person. Call 7472845.

CHINESE Monk (G/L Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City) makes party organizing easier with its delivery service. Its efficient and friendly staff makes sure the food arrives at your doorstep hot and fresh. Call 8974129.


Watch Pinoy Power in America's Hottest Dance Challenge!
SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE
SEE IT FIRST ON ABC
Friday 11pm

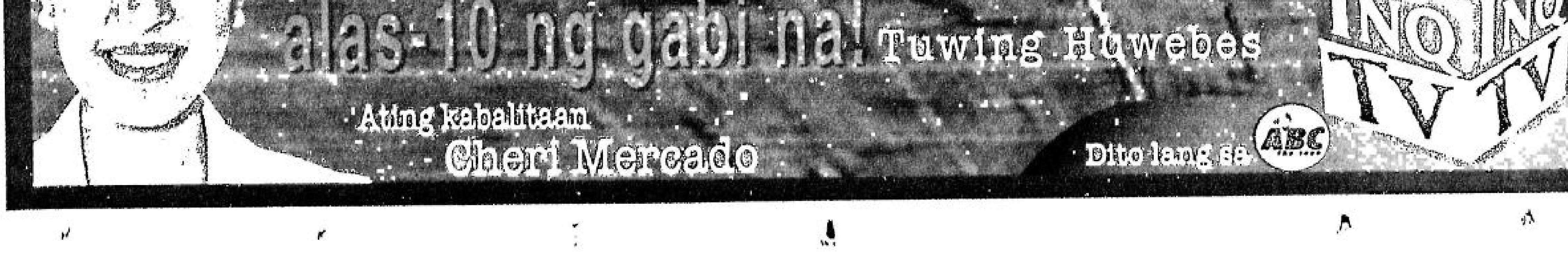
ClickTheCity.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE

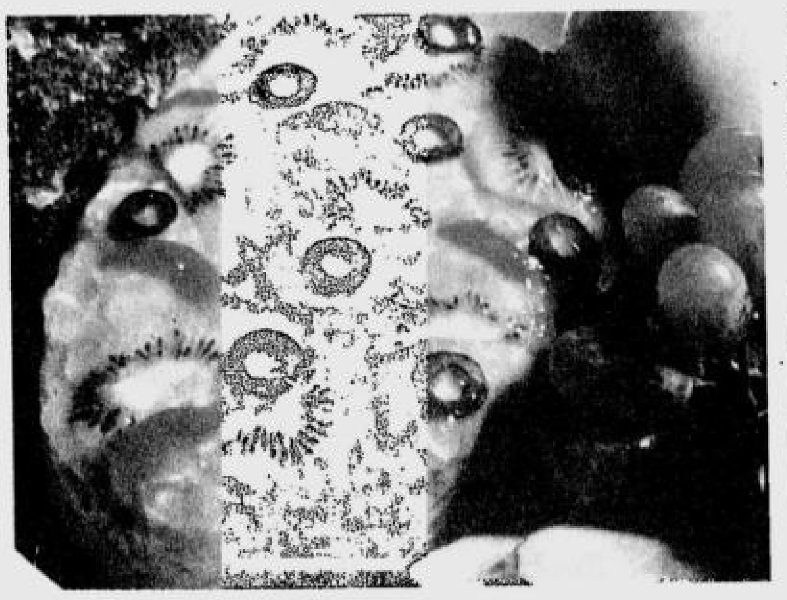
Thursday, December 22, 2005

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		Barclay's EPL		Goals		Sentro	Mumbai Thrillers	S.O.S		Wala Yan Sa Lolo Ko		Big News	Rockstar (Result Show)	Inq TV		Billboard On-Air
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Pilipinas Game KNB?	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
AXN		CSI: Miami (Season 3)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 5)		Mondo Magic	Samsung Sports World	Amazon		24		Gamemax	Hollywood's Greatest Stunts	Fear Factor (Season IV)		The World's Wildest Commercials	The World's Wildest Commercials	The Contender	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename Kids Next Door		The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Machine Robo-Rescue	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One		Nang Bumuka Ang Sampaguita				Insiang				Sabel				Extranghero				Ping Lacson Story	
Cinemax			The Man Who Knew Too Much				Any Which Way You Can				Premonition			Blue City			Tunnel The Berlin Decision		
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	Global Office	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia		Hour China		Wild Discovery		Disaster At The Death Coast		Extreme Machines		Ultimates		Austin Stevens		Stick Fights & Lip Plates		Power Zone	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Lizzie Maguire		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN	Table Tennis '05 Killerspin	Pro Billiards '05 Women's Trick Shot Magic Billiards		Winter X Games Classic		Goals!	X-Games Files 04	Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards '05 Women's Trick Shot Magic Billiards		Beyond Premier Snooker League '05				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		GBB	Knock First	1 Hr. Edited Version Of Today Show		Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Good Morning Miami	Committed	American Dreams		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Virtue Storybook	Image Of God	Your Vocation: God's Call In Your Life	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Good Or Evil: Who Decides?	EWTN Gallery	Where God Weeps	EWTN Live (Encore) With Fr. Mitch Pacwa		Catechisms And Controversies	The Word Was Made Flesh	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	The Journey Home Encore	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Encantadia	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Magpakailanman			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Who's The Boss	Bewitched IV	The Nanny III	Family Law II		Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		Naughty Or Nice			Judging Amy (10:35PM)		Family Law II (11:25PM)
HBO				Let's Get Harry			Cellular (5:45 PM)				Phantom Force			Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban					Impulse (11:20PM)
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		ME TV					IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	Dr. Katz	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Beat The Geeks	WWE Survivor Series 2005				Cinematech	Family Guy	Mad TV		Reno 911	Crank Yankers	South Park	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Hip-Hop Nation	Ride With Funk Master Flex	WWE Velocity	
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Life & Style		E! True Hollywood Story		Road & Track	Back To Basics
MTV Philippines	Moto: 5 Things...Fort Minor	MTV Cribs	That MTV Chart Show		Pimp My Ride	Pop Inc.		MTV Hits				MTV Hits	Get Spotted	TRL		Punk'D	Brand New	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX News		Star MYX	MYXLOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Megastructures		Explorations Powered By Duracell	Seismo Seconds	D-Day		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Megastructures		Explorations Powered By Duracell	Egypt Detectives
NBN				New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Siya?	Sea Games				Teledyaryo				Network Forum		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blue's Clues/ What Planet Are You From	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot/ Fight On Top	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly Odd Parents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	ChalkZone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Papunta Ka Pa Lang, Pabalik Na Ako		Tina, My Tina Bukas Ang Bintana				Sarah Geronimo: The Popstar				Captain Barbell				Motown Greatest Hits Concert		
Qtv		Endless Christmas (Navidad Sin Fin)	Mariana (Sin Pecado Concebida)	Cabecita	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Golden Bowl	Star	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	O, Mare Ko		All In	News On Q	Women's Desk		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	WWE Smackdown		The Ultimate Fighter		Revelations		Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Bmg Video			
Solar Sports		WTA 2005 Thailand Open SF1					NBA Game: Clippers @ Nets					Sportsdesk		NBA Game: Trailblazers @ Grizzlies					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus	NBA Game Seattle @ Phoenix					Party Poker.com World Open 2005				Raceworld		NFL 2005 Cincinnati @ Detroit						Celebrity Poker Tournament 2	
Star Movies			Heaven's Pond (3:40 PM)			All Dogs Go To Heaven 2 (5:15 PM)			Master And Commander: The Far Side Of The World (6:40 PM)					Terminator 2: Judgement Day				Curse Of The Komodo (11:15PM)	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	Scrubs	8 Simple Rules	Ms World/ John Lennon: Working Class Hero		The Apprentice		Friends	Scrubs
Studio 23		Yugioh Duel Monster		UAAP				Batman Beyond	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Contender		Alias (8:20 PM)	Desperate Housewives		News Central	Oprah		Still

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.


Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

FIESTA Cooked Ham


SM Bonus Pear Shaped Ham

HOLIDAY Ham

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Choose your own
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The many ways to ham it up this Christmas

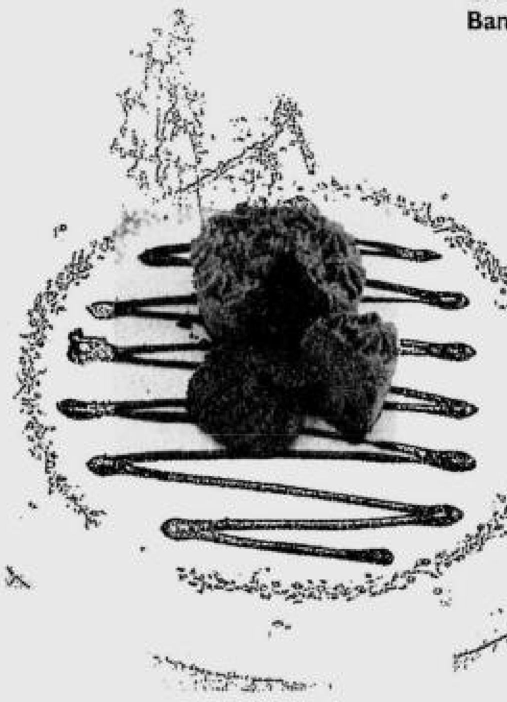
SUPER SM HYPERMARKET OFFERS MANY ham varieties for holiday family gatherings or office parties at affordable prices.

Here are some ham ideas from Super SM Hypermarket:

- Fiesta Cooked Ham, sugar-glazed, ready-to-serve and boneless, is made from specially selected pork shoulder or leg cuts that are steam-cooked for tenderness.
- Chinese Cooked Ham, slightly dry yet tender whole bone ham, is prepared the traditional way. It is smoked, salted, and blended with Chinese spices, then sugar-glazed.
- Brick Ham is an American-style party ham shaped for easy cutting into portions. It is ready to eat, cured, and fully cooked.
- Pear Shaped Ham is cured, fully cooked ham made from pork lean meat with hints of sugar, mild spices, and salt. Its affordable price makes it suitable for gift-giving.
- Chicken Cooked Ham is made from selected whole broiled and mildly smoked chicken with a dash of sweetness. It blends the distinctive taste of smoked premium ham and unique taste of chicken.
- Holiday Ham, a Christmas classic glazed with sugar and pineapple, it is great for Noche Buena, New Year and other events.

The hams are available at Super SM Hypermarket outlets at SM City Sucat, SM City Bicutan, SM City Marilao, and the new SM Supercenter Valenzuela and SM Supercenter Molino.

PAUL MASSON
California's Best Value Wine
PAUL MASSON
PAUL MASSON


CHOCO Banana Mousse
RODEL ROTONI

Holiday treats . . .

From page C1

Pink Margarita

1 can (19cl) Del Monte Pina Margarita
1 can (24 cl) Del Monte Pineapple Orange 202
1 tbsp Del Monte Grenadine Syrup
1 tbsp Del Monte Strawberry Margarita Syrup
1 scoop crushed ice

Blend all ingredients until frothy. Pour into a margarita glass. Garnish and serve.

Choco Banana Mousse

1 c chocolate cookie crumbs
2 tbsp Magnolia Gold Butter
For chocolate mousse:
1 envelope unflavored gelatin
2/3 c semi-sweet chocolate chips or milk chocolate
1 pack Del Monte Fruit Salad Cream, chilled
1 pc fresh egg yolk
¾ c Del Monte Banana Puree

Combine chocolate cookie crumbs and melted butter. Press every 2 tbsp of chocolate cookie crumbs in ramekins or custard cups. Set aside remaining crumbs. Chill for 30 mins.

Sprinkle gelatin in 2 tbsp cold water then mix with 2 tbsp hot water. Stir until completely dissolved.

Melt chocolate chips in double boiler. Whip fruit salad cream until soft peaks then add egg yolk, banana puree and dissolved gelatin. Add melted chocolate and whip some more.

Spoon into prepared ramekins. Top with remaining cookie crumbs. Chill for 1 hour or longer before serving. Makes seven servings.

Banoffee Pie

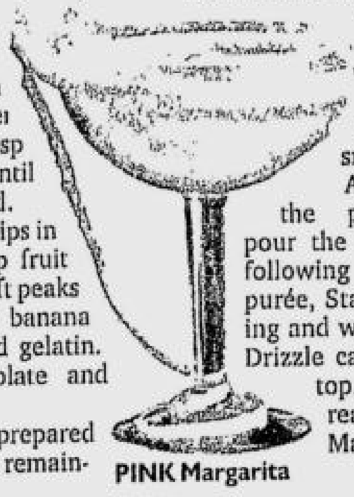
Crust:
150 g Graham Cracker Crumbs
75 g Magnolia Baker's Best Margarine, melted
Filling:
300 g Del Monte Banana Puree
60 g Star Choconut
30 g Magnolia Fresh Milk
Topping:
250 g Magnolia Whip n Top
187 g cold water
Caramel sauce:
100 g sugar
30 g water
125g all-purpose cream
15 g Magnolia Gold Butter

Mix thoroughly Graham Cracker crumbs and melted margarine. Press it on to 9" pie pan. Chill crust to set. Cook milk and Star Choconut in a saucepan over low heat until smooth.

For topping: Whip Whip n Top until smooth. Add cold water while whipping. Whip until stiff. Chill.

Caramel sauce: Heat water and sugar in a saucepan until light brown in color. Remove from heat and gradually add cream and butter. Mix thoroughly until smooth.

Assembly: On the prepared crust pour the mixture in the following order—banana purée, Star Choconut filling and whipped topping. Drizzle caramel sauce on top. Chill until ready to serve. Makes 8 servings.


PINK Margarita

The best way to say Merry Christmas!
HOLIDAY FEAST
NEW
Family SPAM Lovers Pizza* • 2 orders Spaghetti with Meatsauce • 1 pack Cheetos Pizza Pyramids (35g) • 1.5 liter Pepsi MAX
Maximum taste, No sugar!
or your next pizza is FREE!
Pinaka pizza
Pizza Hut
* American Classic Crust
Prices subject to 10% service charge and local tax. Promo runs from November 22, 2005 to January 2, 2006. Valid for takeout and delivery.
For Metro Manila delivery, just call 911-11-11
based on 2005 ARL survey
Per DTI-NCR permit no. 6577 series of 2005

Lunch with the Prince

AT THE Prince of Jaipur, every single detail is meant to captivate; the tapestries, paintings, and interiors a feast for the eyes.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

IT WAS QUITE A STRUGGLE FOR ME TO choose what story to do for Kitchen Rescue this week. After all, it's Christmas so it has to be special.

Yesterday, at lunch in Prince of Jaipur, I had one of the most enthralling of experiences. Yes, it was the excellence of the food, by far the best and tastiest Indian fare in the country. Upon savoring it, one could tell that it was made only from the finest ingredients.

I knew I was in for a gustatory treat the minute the Roti Chanai laid claim to my palate, not to mention the richness of the Dhal Makhani (Punjab Black Lentil Stew), Skewers of Lamb Shish Kebab, Tikkas of Paneer, Fish and Chicken (*tikka*—cooked in *tandoor* oven), alongside Curries of Lamb in Tomato, Prawn Palak (spinach) and Methi Paneer (cottage cheese and fenugreek).

No one has gone out of his way to create such an environment to please his diners as much as the gracious restaurateur Max Taljera

In, Martin Dorf's book, "Restaurants that Work," Melman of Lettuce Entertain You summarized the present restaurant scene in a nutshell. He wrote: "Today's sophisticated diner is not satisfied with bread alone! It used to be that to run a successful restaurant, all you needed was good food. Then you needed not just good food but good service, too. Now, you need to deliver great food, great service, ambience, and possess a real sense of what people want."

In my opinion, no one has gone out of his way to create such an environment to please his diners as much as the gracious restaurateur Max Taljera.

Jaipur is known as the Pink City of India, getting its name from the rose-colored walls of the palaces of the Indian royal families in the region. Max mimicked the look to perfection.

Dining with him and Chef Murlidjhar Khalbay was a sensual moment. As you walked in, no single detail was spared, each meant to captivate. The tapestries, paintings, oh the interiors, were a feast for the eyes! The hint of spices in the air heightened the expectation for the repast yet to come, all this while Ravi Shankar played his sitar leading you to a state of hypnotic relaxation.

I was honored with the pleasure of Max's company. His peppered Indian tales of history, culture and food made this one of the most "complete" meals I ever had. So into the moment was I, that lunch ended at half past 3. Now, more than ever, I am seriously contemplating my next Jaipur meal and that long overdue trip to India.

I want to share bits and pieces of that moment with you, though it will have to be in two parts. I hope that it sparks the same interest in a culture as opulent as India's.

Q & A

I asked the questions and here are the answers:

Why do you think Indian food is not as popular in the Philippines?

A lot of Filipinos always thought that Indian food meant curry, spicy, chili, smelly. But it's not like that. As a matter of fact, curry doesn't mean spicy. It is not really a "dish" at all but just a sauce, gravy. Spice doesn't mean chili. "Spices" means herbs that are not necessarily hot like chili.

If one were to travel to India, what is a good itinerary?

Kashmir (heaven on earth), Jaipur (golden triangle) with its fabulous palaces (pink city), New Delhi (red fort and many historical places), Agra (world-famous Taj Mahal), Goa (famous for its beaches, something like Boracay but bigger with many five- and six-star hotels, one-hour flight from Bombay), Bombay commercial and Bollywood stars' city.

In the south, Kovalam beaches are where you can have *ayurveda* massage and oil treatments. The last but famous Hyderabad, site of the well-known museum of Nizam (supposed to be the richest man in the world with his fabulous jewelry collections, cars, swords, guns, statues, crystal, carpets, chandeliers and many impressive items from around the world.)

Can you recommend good restaurants in India?

Bukhara in New Delhi and Copper Chimney in Bombay.

Next week... More of India, plus Max and Chef Murlidjhar share their recipes.

As I was handed a sheet of paper before leaving the restaurant, I, too, leave you with this... Wishing you and all those dear to you a very Merry Christmas!

The Essence of Shri Bhagavad Gita (Indian Holy Book)

"Why are you unnecessarily worrying? Whom do you fear? Who can kill you? Soul is not born, nor does it die. What has happened has happened for the best. What will happen will happen for the best. Do you brood over the past? Do not worry about the future. The present is on.

"What have you lost, that you are weeping? What have you brought, that you have lost? What have you made that has been destroyed? You brought not anything. What you have, you got from here. What was given was given here. What you took, you took from this universe. What you gave, you gave unto this universe.

"You have come empty-handed and shall go empty-handed. What is yours today was somebody else's in the past and will be somebody else's in the future. You think it is yours and are deeply engrossed in it. This attachment is the cause of all your sorrow.

"Change is the law of life."

Prince of Jaipur is at Unit E, The Fort. Call 8841692/94.

For comments or suggestions e-mail raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

HONG KONG DISNEYLAND

Enjoy the magic of
Hong Kong Disneyland with Visa.

Visa Hong Kong Disneyland Getaway

Have a magical vacation in Hong Kong Disneyland the Visa way -- get a chance to win a round trip for a family of 4 to Hong Kong Disneyland. Plus enjoy breakfast with your favorite Disney characters, and receive 2 FASTPASS tickets per guest (8 for a family of 4) for line reservations in selected rides and shows.

Be mesmerized and dazzled with the 4 magical worlds of Hong Kong Disneyland. Experience what it was like in the turn of the 20th Century in **Main Street, USA**. Be intrigued at the mysterious jungle of **Adventureland**. Meet Mickey and all his friends in **Fantasyland** and blast into outer space at futuristic **Tomorrowland**! Timeless tales and bold adventures are brought magically to life for children of all ages.

Mechanics:

1. Promo Period: 27 November 2005 to 24 January 2006.
2. Minimum of P500 single-receipt Visa purchase will allow Visa cardholder to register his/her Visa transaction for a chance to win one (1) of seven (7) Family of Four packages to Hong Kong Disneyland on March 2-4, 2006. PLUS HK$5,000 pocket money*

How to join?

Register your Visa transactions at any of the following available channels:

1.

SMS: Text Visa for details P2.50 per text will be charged.	Globe - 2361 Smart - 325 Visa <name as it appears on card,address,issuing bank,last 4 digit,amount of transaction,date of transaction,time of transaction> and send to the corresponding access number of your mobile network. (Note that there are no spaces after each comma. Please do not use commas for amounts more than P999.99, and when entering the address.) Ex. Visa MENNIE SO,24/F 6750 AYALA AVENUE MAKATI CITY,AIG,1234,1000.25,112705,1808

2. Call Center: Metro Manila - 637 2768, Provincial - Toll Free # 1800-1888-2591

3. Website: www.hblmasia.com/visa

DISNEY VISA

*Per family of four
See flyers for details Per DTI-NCR Permit No 3082. Series of 2005

LIFESTYLE

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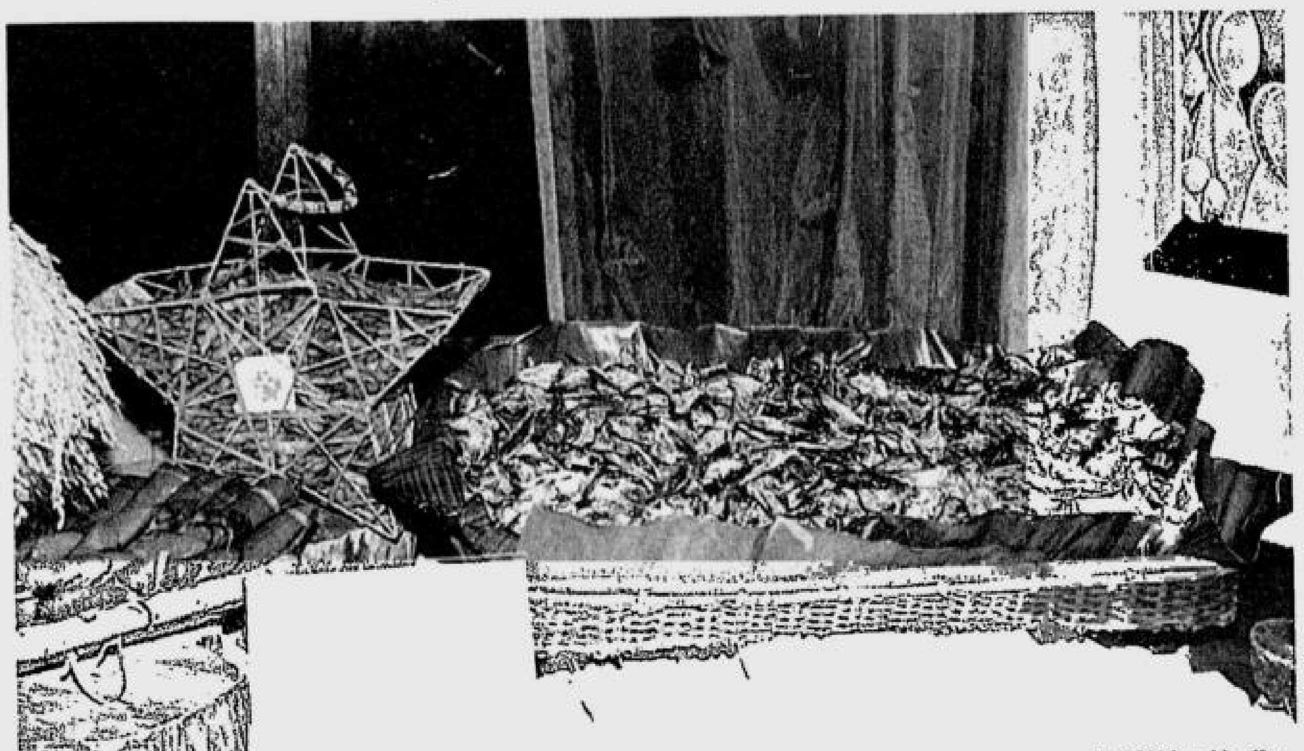
Text us your feedback:
Inquirer life name/age/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)



SLOW food buffet

A taste of things to come

Expect more writing on the vast repertoire that is Filipino cooking to follow 'Slow Food: Filipino Culinary Traditions'

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

WHAT PEOPLE mostly remembered of the wake of writer Doreen Gamboa Fernandez was the food fiesta that happened each evening. Those were all donated by friends who happened to own restaurants.

It was a happy wake and I suppose it must have been how she wanted it. It was a fitting as well as filling tribute to a lady who wrote about food and taught us how to write on the subject.

At the recent launch of "Slow Food: Filipino Culinary Traditions," a book dedicated to Fernandez, some of the same friends contributed food again. It was their way of supporting a project that put together writings on her favorite subject, Filipino cooking.

The essays were by members of three groups: the Manila Ladies Branch of the International Wine and Food Society where Fernandez served as vice president; winners of the writing competition named in her honor (DGF Food Writing Award); Slow Food Manila Convivium (SFMC), the local chapter of an international movement that advocates preserving traditional cooking and ingredients.

The two Soong brothers, Rafael and Gabriel, of North Park were only too willing to bring Fernandez's favorite *comida* China food. Two huge chaffing dishes, the biggest ones I've ever encountered, contained *pancit canton* and *pinsec frito*, ground pork mix in *wonton* wrappers. They also gave almost countless *siomai* and *lechon* Macao pieces.

Into the past

Those provided a taste journey into the past before all these Hong Kong-style Chinese cooking became the vogue.

Ed Quimson brought his homemade *chorizo bola-bola* and one of his concoctions at Filo's (The Fort), *adobo* spring rolls.

Myrna Segismundo of Restaurant 9501 brought crisp *empanadas* and banana *turron*, those bite-size pieces of *saba* banana in *lumpia* wrappers, fried and sweetened with caramelized sugar.

Tootsie Marco of Kamayan gave the sinful *chicharon* Bisaya, small crunchy pieces of pork fat that looked as if all the lard was squeezed out leaving the good fiber. At least that's how we excused ourselves for eating a lot of those.

Through Mariano Garchitorena, public relations director of The Peninsula Manila, the hotel contributed smoked *tanguigue*. The launch was at Le Soufflé in Rockwell, Makati, and chef Jessie Sincioco made her cocktail menu essentially Filipino with a trendy touch. Passed around were seafood *kinilaw* (ceviche), *adobo* in *profiterols*, and *pritson flautas* or roast pork in baked pastry. On the buffet, there were pickled quails' eggs in *achara* nests and *lumpiang ubod* with shrimps. Her dessert pieces were mango strudel and heavenly *tocino del cielo* , which someone said went straight from your mouth to your hips and stayed there.

What gave the unusual touch, and hence surprised the guests, were the contributions of the SFMC members.

Mara Pardo de Tavera brought *suman* made of organic purple rice or *balitanao*. The aroma of ginger was so palpable when the banana wrapping was opened. It was Tavera's delicious way of saying we should save our indigenous rice varieties and the Banawe terraces where they grow.

Tavera also brought boiled *utaw* (soybeans still in the pod, or what is known as *edamame* in Japanese restaurants).

Amazing combination

Everyone that evening was amazed, as well, with the slices of *saba* bananas with sautéed *guinamos na hipon* on top. The sweet banana and salty fermented fish on each piece thoroughly mesmerized palates that evening. The combination was brought by Leny de Borja, a reinsurance broker, who, with Paolo Clavecilla, wrote "Cagayan de Oro in my Palate."

Hipon is how the tiny fish caught near the mouth of the Cagayan River and the Macajalar Bay is called. The name can be confusing for Tagalogs who know *hipon* to be shrimp.

Ipat Luna brought a huge tray of crisp fried *biya* (flat-headed goby fish) that were gobbled up. Luna, who is president of her own environmental law office, wrote on the *biya* and the vanishing *tawilis* (fresh water sardine), both species found only in the Taal Lake.

Chef Sincioco's Slow Food contribution was *sapin-sapin*, that all-white layered native cake, a recipe of her grandmother's that Sincioco's mother used to make for us until daughter Jessie could do it on her own.

Pia Lim Castillo brought *ginataang labong na may mais*. She said she took advantage of the bamboo shoot season, cooking the *labong* with coconut milk and corn kernels.

While the launch buffet provided a taste of some recipes in the book, the Manila Ladies who put together "Slow Food: Filipino Culinary Traditions" said the book was just the first taste of still more writing to come on the vast repertoire that was Filipino cooking.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood04@yahoo.com

Murasaki opens at The Wharf

"A cozy Japanese restaurant just around the corner" is how Tito P. Delos Angeles describes Murasaki. Tito conceptualized this project over a year ago, actually from ground zero.

This little Japanese restaurant was not freed of its birth pains, and when it finally came to be, there had to be a soft opening in order to polish operations up, considering Tito and his partners, Malouchi A. Gahol, Jun Gaffud, Mark Madrid, and Levi Baligod had no experience whatsoever in the restaurant business, except that they all love good food.

When Murasaki's menu was being prepared, each item, before it can be offered to the public, had to pass many criticisms and tests, including non-usage of MSG.

Tito and Jun both agree that quality should never be sacrificed when it comes to good food, that is why Murasaki buys only the best and the fresh.

Mark (far left) and PaoloVillar (far right) with Murasaki kids (from left) Julia, Christian and Ann Marie inaugurate Murasaki at Brittany Bay's The Wharf, just off the Sucat exit. Witnessing the event are (from left) Rica, Malouchi Gahol, Marilen Posadas (Brittany Corp.'s joint venture partner), Sashi/Kenshi, Jing Serrano (Brittany Corp. President and CEO) and Jerry Navarette (President of Crown Asia)

But Murasaki is not only about good food, it is also about a restaurant with a heart. The owners want its clientele to enjoy quality Japanese cuisine at a price affordable to all.

Murasaki also wants their guests to take the time to enjoy good food since time is also given in the preparation of each dish that leaves the kitchen.

In today's hustle and bustle, Murasaki understands that guests want their orders out fast, but this little nook prides itself that each dish is cooked only when ordered and for this reason, a minimum of 20 to 25 minutes is what it takes for the finished product to reach the tables.

Murasaki is open Sunday to Thursday from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm, and Fridays and Saturdays from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm to 12:00 midnight.

Mondays are for the staff to rest, to relax and to enjoy after six days of good work – why? Because Murasaki is all heart.

We invite you to share with us a Murasaki experience at Brittany Bay, amidst scenic Laguna de Bay, and the beautiful La Posada development. SEE YOU!

Dining at Murasaki becomes extra special with the great service provided by the Murasaki staff led by Sashi/Kenshi (far left, standing)

AWARDED Superbrands PHILIPPINES 2005/2006

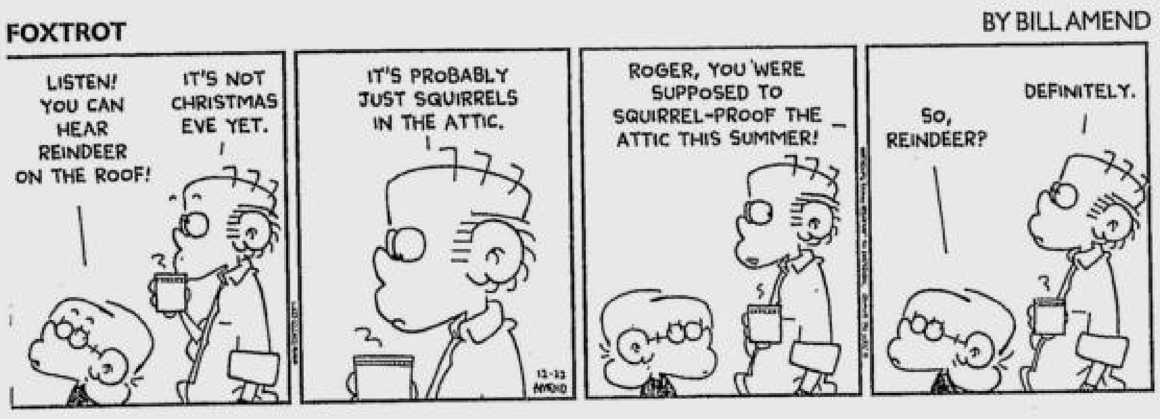
Novellino

The only way to enjoy wine this Christmas.

Let the season's cheer flow with Novellino wines. Bold, refreshing flavors.
Rich, sparkling testures. The holidays have never tasted so good.

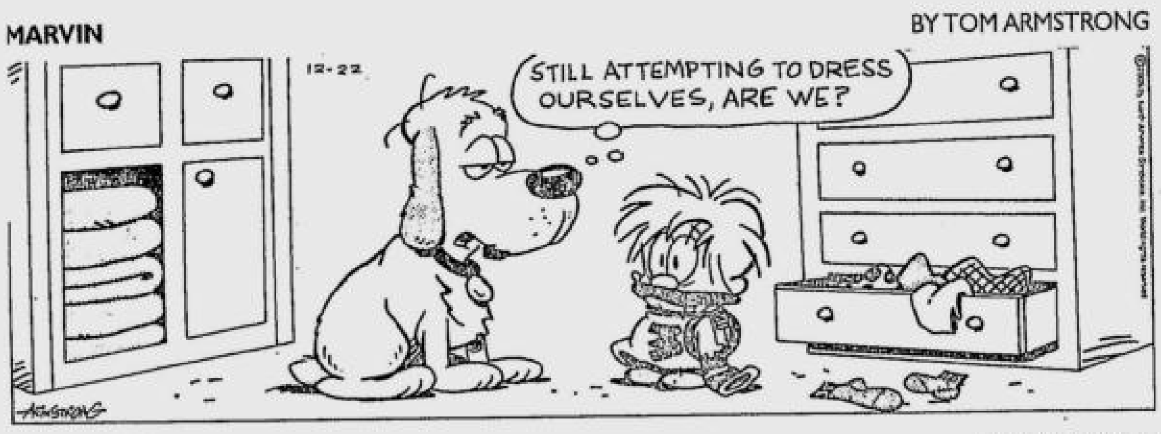
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


LISTEN! YOU CAN HEAR REINDEER ON THE ROOF!
IT'S NOT CHRISTMAS EVE YET.
IT'S PROBABLY JUST SQUIRRELS IN THE ATTIC.
12-22 AMEND
ROGER, YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO SQUIRREL-PROOF THE ATTIC THIS SUMMER!
SO, REINDEER?
DEFINITELY.

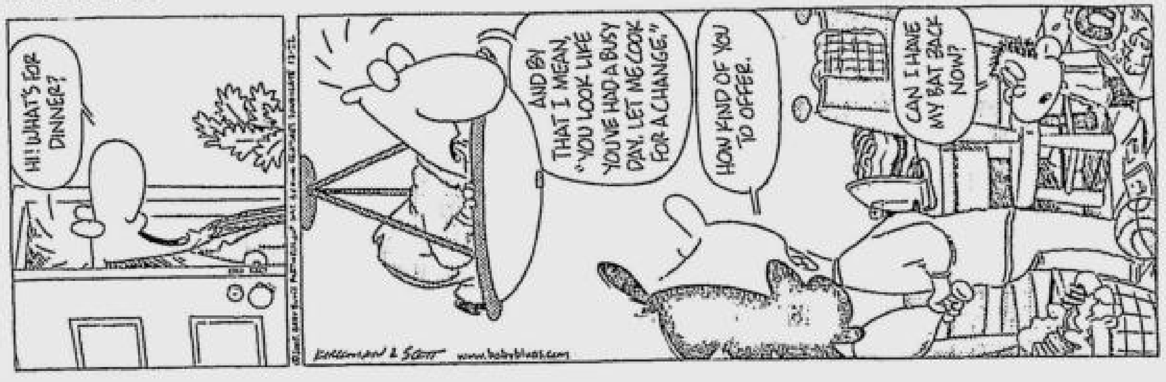
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


12-22
STILL ATTEMPTING TO DRESS OURSELVES, ARE WE?
ARMSTRONG

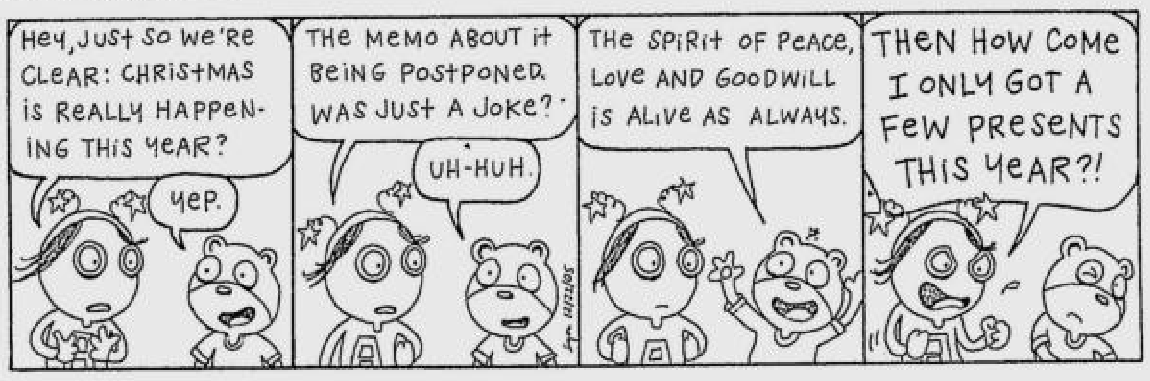
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HI! WHAT'S FOR DINNER?
AND BY THAT I MEAN, "YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE HAD A BUSY DAY. LET ME COOK FOR A CHANGE."
HOW KIND OF YOU TO OFFER.
CAN I HAVE MY BAT BACK NOW?
KIRKMAN & SCOTT www.babyblues.com

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


HEY, JUST SO WE'RE CLEAR: CHRISTMAS IS REALLY HAPPENING THIS YEAR?
YEP.
THE MEMO ABOUT IT BEING POSTPONED WAS JUST A JOKE?
UH-HUH.
THE SPIRIT OF PEACE, LOVE AND GOODWILL IS ALIVE AS ALWAYS.
THEN HOW COME I ONLY GOT A FEW PRESENTS THIS YEAR?!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're very careful about whatever you do. You are precise. Your outer mask suggests conservative security; however, internally, you are a psychic—even prophetic! Others do not really know you. In fact, you have a secretive nature. (You're certainly private.) The year ahead will be social, fun-loving and joyful. All relationships (especially marriage) are favored.
Birthdate of: Diane Sawyer, TV journalist; Giacomo Puccini, composer; Ralph Fiennes, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): People at work might be pushy today. (Let's hope you're not one of them.) Avoid power struggles with a female coworker. Let sleeping dogs lie.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Parents must not be overly eager to improve their kids today. (Because that is what your impulse is.) Your children are individuals in their own right; they are not necessarily younger versions of you!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Power struggles with female family members (especially mothers) are likely today. Resist the urge to try to make somebody over. Learn to live and let live.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You're determined to get somebody to agree with you or see your way of doing things. Is this really so important? Don't be overzealous in your attempts to persuade others.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You feel like you must have something today. You want to buy it right now! This is almost an obsession. (This is not the right frame of mind in which to shop—don't you agree?)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): The Moon is in your sign today, but it makes a strong aspect to big daddy Pluto. This makes you willful and extremely determined! (Tread softly.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might unearth some juicy secrets today. Some kind of hidden information will likely surface. (Naturally, you will be discreet, right?)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You or a friend is determined to convince the other one about something today. This could bring about a clash of wills. Is this worth risking your friendship?

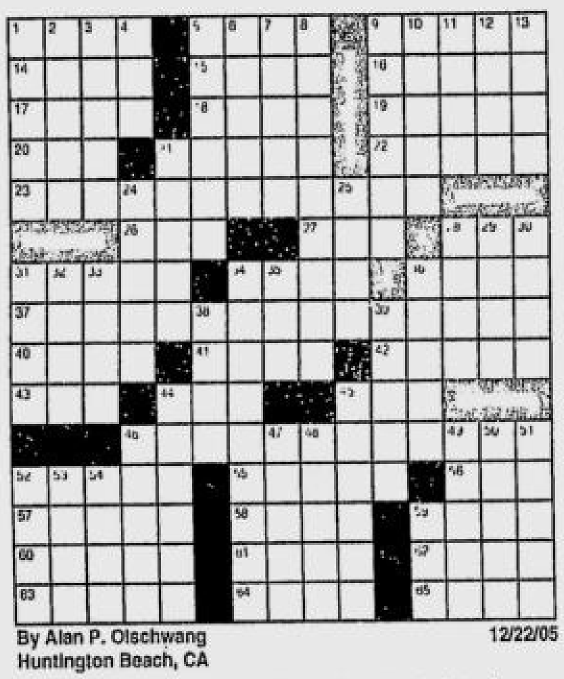
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Bosses, authority figures, teachers and parents are rather pushy today. Somebody is coming down hard. It's probably best to go along for the ride, unless you really disagree.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're determined to do something different today or go someplace you've never been before. You want to expand your world, and you want to do it now!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You can make good headway delving into old material connected with insurance matters, bills, taxes and debt today. You've got the determination necessary to get the job done.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Today the Moon opposes your sign, and it squares Pluto. This is the classic day for upsetting conversations with partners, friends and authority figures. People think they know best. (Sigh.)

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
12/22/05

ACROSS

1 __-Ude, Russia
5 File markers
9 Wound covers
14 Epidermal opening
15 Writer Wiesel
16 Quibble
17 Stated
18 Standard
19 Writer Loos
20 UFO crew
21 Riyadh man
22 Saunter
23 Start of Emerson quote
26 PC key
27 Kimono accessory
28 Iron-pumper's pride
31 Insect stage
34 Feast the eyes on
36 Beginner: var.
37 Part 2 of quote
40 Evils
41 Desktop image
42 Slalom curves
43 Pig's place
44 Cycle starter?
45 Take a load off
46 End of quote
52 Seaweed and pond scum
55 Boundary
56 Play for a sap
57 Drenches
58 Wing-shaped
59 "Born Free" lioness
60 "My Cousin Vinny" Oscar-winner
61 Camp quarters
62 Become vague
63 Prayer enders
64 Goddess of discord
65 Spellers' contests

DOWN

1 Overturn
2 Disinclined
3 Face the day
4 Homer's neighbor
5 Lessee
6 Spoken
7 Wrens and larks
8 Punctuation mark
9 Shrimp dish
10 Tippy vessel
11 Rara __
12 Take the bait
13 Dispatch the dragon
21 Perm milieu
24 Largest city in Nigeria
25 Fence the loot
28 Draws a bead on
29 Highlands hillside
30 Boys of the house
31 Winged wader
32 Thaw
33 Confederate
34 Swing back and forth
35 Classic Pontiac letters
36 Kernel's coat
38 __ d'Italia (bicycle race)
39 Stickup
44 Academic dissertation
45 Circumvents
46 Rouse
47 Edmonton hockey player
48 Man from Muscat
49 Fine silk fabric
50 Publish
51 Salty drops
52 Dog in "The Thin Man"
53 Weaver's apparatus
54 Prey
59 Flow out

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

Q	U	A	D	S		W	A	R	N		F	L	I	P
U	N	L	E	T		O	L	I	O		L	O	D	E
A	T	S	E	A		M	O	M	S		A	V	E	S
G	O	O		R	I	B	E	Y	E	S	T	E	A	K
			O	K	R	A			C	O	L	D	L	Y
N	U	M	B	E	R	T	H	E	O	R	Y			
O	N	A	I	R			A	N	N	E		J	O	G
D	I	R	T		G	O	R	G	E		D	I	V	A
S	T	Y		P	A	N	E			G	O	M	E	Z
			T	I	M	E	M	A	G	A	Z	I	N	E
A	S	S	U	M	E			V	A	S	E			
C	U	T	F	A	S	T	B	A	L	L		K	I	D
T	R	O	T		H	A	I	L		A	N	I	T	A
O	G	R	E		O	R	E	O		M	O	W	E	R
R	E	E	D		W	O	R	N		P	R	I	M	E

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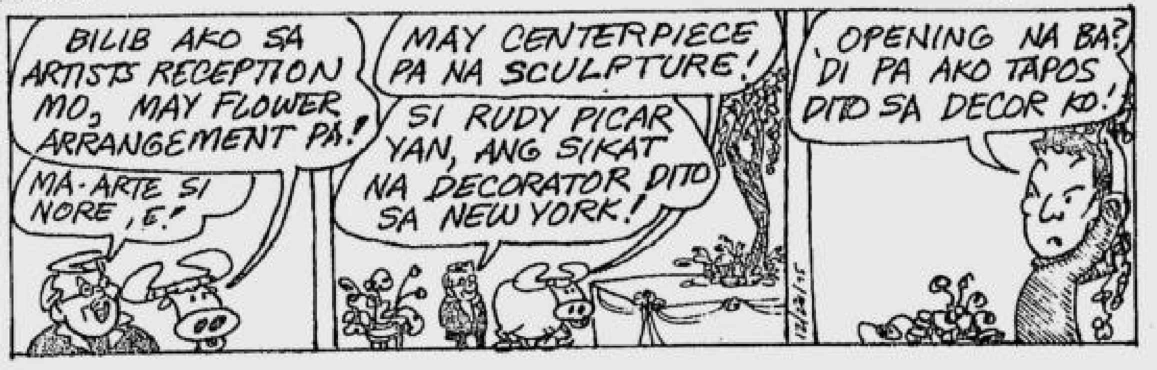
12/22/05

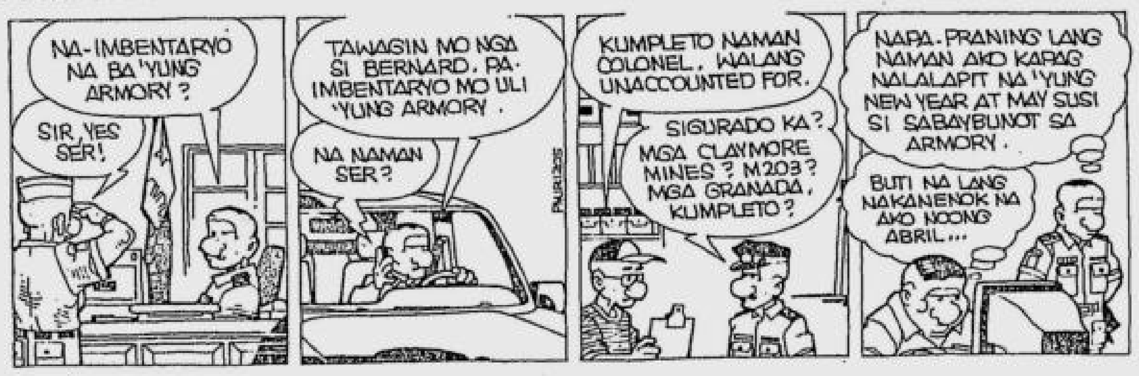
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


BILIB AKO SA ARTISTS RECEPTION MO, MAY FLOWER ARRANGEMENT PA!
MA-ARTE SI NORE, E!
MAY CENTERPIECE PA NA SCULPTURE!
SI RUDY PICAR YAN, ANG SIKAT NA DECORATOR DITO SA NEW YORK!
12/21/05
OPENING NA BA? 'DI PA AKO TAPOS DITO SA DECOR KO!

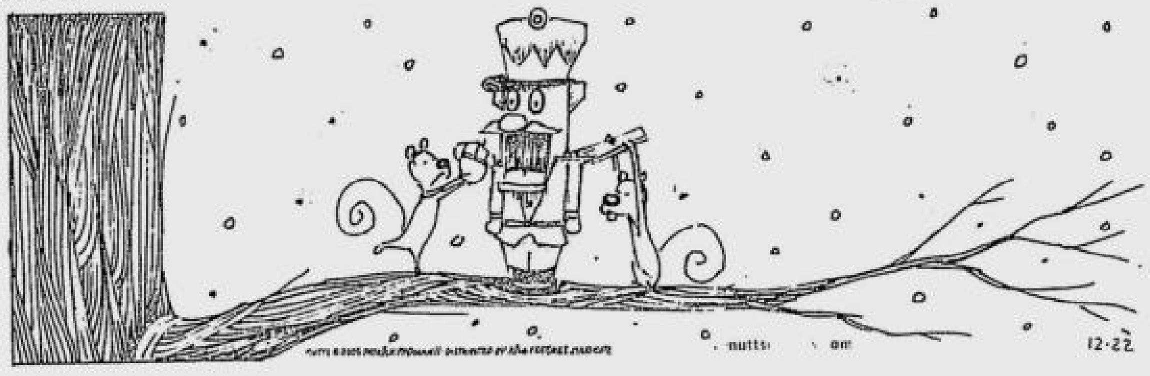
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NA-IMBENTARYO NA BA 'YUNG ARMORY?
SIR, YES SER!
TAWAGIN MO NGA SI BERNARD. PA-IMBENTARYO MO ULI 'YUNG ARMORY.
NA NAMAN SER?
KUMPLETO NAMAN COLONEL. WALANG UNACCOUNTED FOR.
SIGURADO KA? MGA CLAYMORE MINES? M203? MGA GRANADA, KUMPLETO?
NAPA-PRANING LANG NAMAN AKO KAPAG NALALAPIT NA 'YUNG NEW YEAR AT MAY SUSI SI SABAYBUNOT SA ARMORY.
BUTI NA LANG NAKANENOK NA AKO NOONG ABRIL...

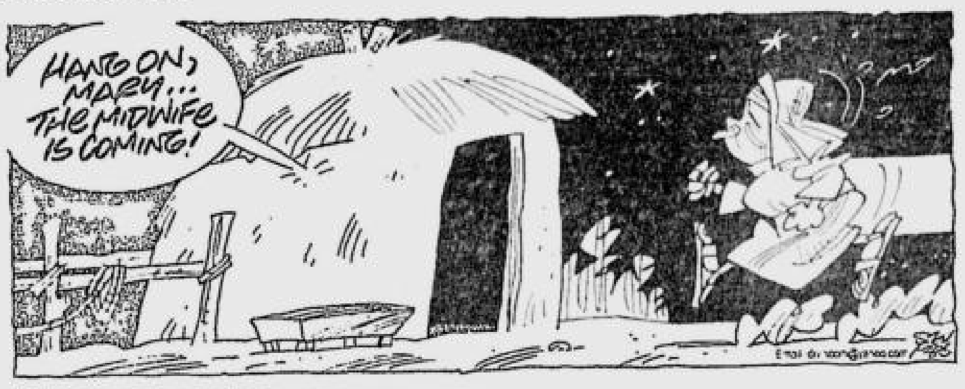
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL



DIVINE COMEDY

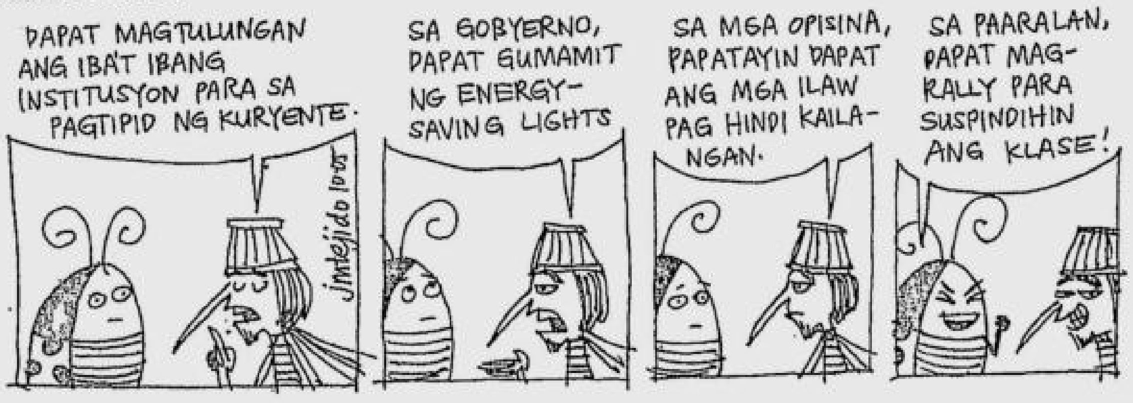
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


HANG ON, MARY... THE MIDWIFE IS COMING!

THE FIRST PERSON TO VISIT THE NATIVITY

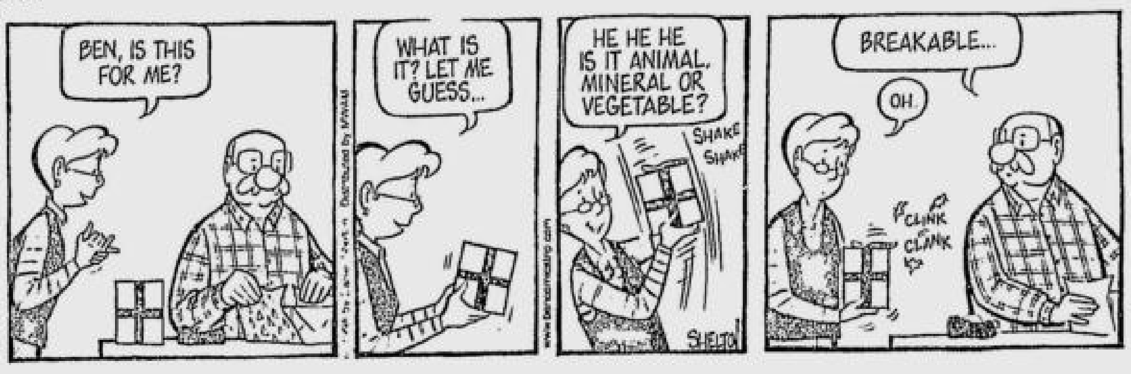
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


DAPAT MAGTULUNGAN ANG IBA'T IBANG INSTITUSYON PARA SA PAGTIPID NG KURYENTE.
jmtejido 1205
SA GOBYERNO, DAPAT GUMAMIT NG ENERGY-SAVING LIGHTS
SA MGA OPISINA, PAPATAYIN DAPAT ANG MGA ILAW PAG HINDI KAILANGAN.
SA PAARALAN, DAPAT MAG-RALLY PARA SUSPINDIHIN ANG KLASE!

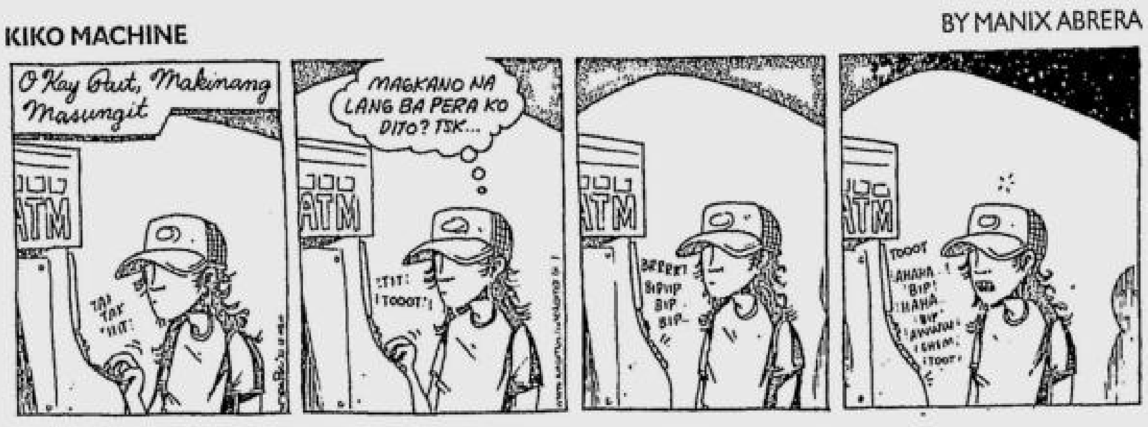
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


BEN, IS THIS FOR ME?
WHAT IS IT? LET ME GUESS...
HE HE HE IS IT ANIMAL, MINERAL OR VEGETABLE?
SHAKE SHAKE
SHELTON
BREAKABLE...
OH.
CLINK CLINK

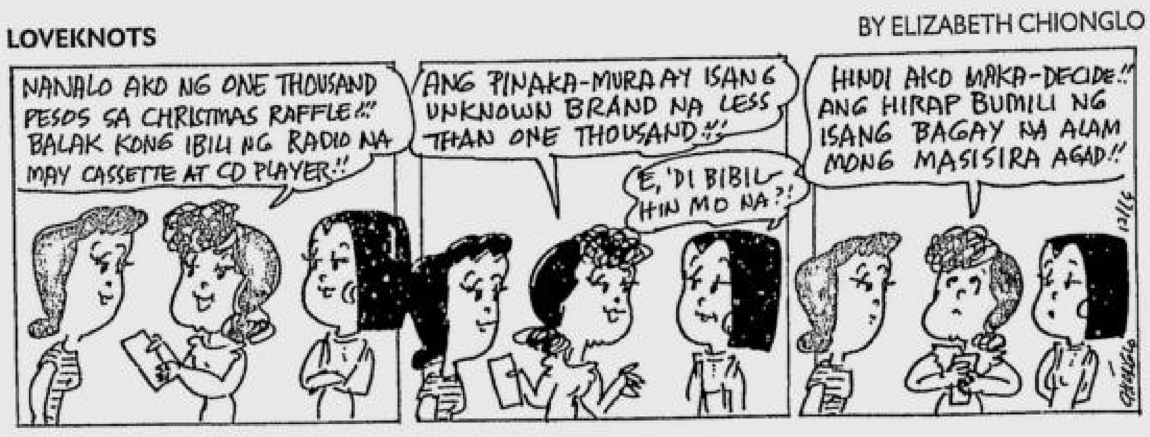
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


O Kay Gut, Makinang Masungit
ATM
TAP TAP 'TIT'
MAGKANO NA LANG BA PERA KO DITO? TSK...
'TIT' 'TOOOT'
BRRRRT BIPIP BIP BIP
TOOOT AHAHA 'BIP' HAHA 'BIP' 'AWAW' 'EHEM' 'TOOT'

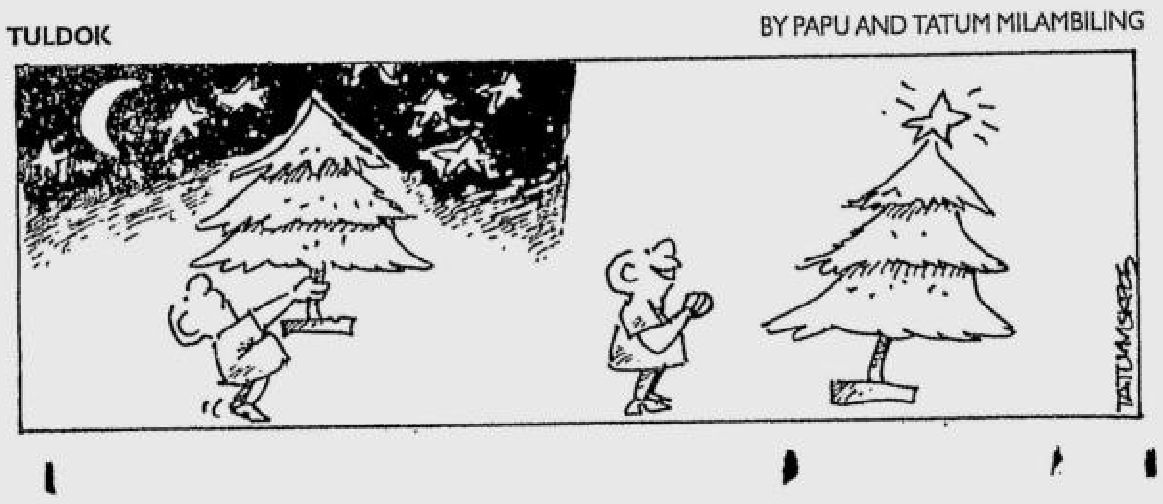
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NANALO AKO NG ONE THOUSAND PESOS SA CHRISTMAS RAFFLE!! BALAK KONG IBILI NG RADIO NA MAY CASSETTE AT CD PLAYER!!
ANG PINAKA-MURA AY ISANG UNKNOWN BRAND NA LESS THAN ONE THOUSAND!!
E, 'DI BIBILHIN MO NA?!
HINDI AKO MAKA-DECIDE!! ANG HIRAP BUMILI NG ISANG BAGAY NA ALAM MONG MASISIRA AGAD!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



Leak-proof cloth diapers

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

WE RECEIVED THIS INTERESTING e-mail from two enterprising friends, Jen CC Tan and Ella Ampongan, who are engaged in the sale and production of cloth diapers.

They announced they had come up with a new line of fabric diapers which, unlike traditional ones, were leak-proof and dry. The main objection to cloth diaper is that it gets easily saturated with liquid. It also leaks and gets the baby and crib all wet.

"My friend and I are now producing better cloth diapers here in the Philippines," Tan explained in her e-mail. The new diapers, according to her, were lined with fleece that absorbed all the liquid.

Called Tushy Wushy, the diapers come in different sizes and colors such as red, yellow, blue and army green.

Tan said cloth diapers were more economical, healthier for the baby and better for the environment.

She added, "We believe we should all do our share in [protecting the] environment for the sake of our children... we'd [also] like our babies' [skin] to touch materials that are chemical-free."

Readers who want to know more about cloth diapers can e-mail Tan at jencctan@gmail.com, or call business partner Ella at 0917-5325643.

Maynilad responds

Dulce M., a resident of Gamban Street, Pasay City, sent us this desperate plea: "Please call the attention of Maynilad regarding the [dark-colored and smelly] water coming out of our faucets. We have repeatedly called Maynilad. The repairmen who came here didn't fix the problem.

"Please help us [get] Maynilad [to look at the problem in] our neighborhood in Barangay 138, Zone 15. We hope they will not use the holidays as an excuse not to solve our water problem."

(We talked to Maynilad's customer service officer who asked for a copy of the complaint. The officer said he would personally call the attention of the officer-in-charge of Maynilad's Pasay branch.)

SSS bonus

Social Security System chief executive officer Corazon de la Paz assured SSS pensioners recently that their 13th month pension, or Christmas bonus, would be released in time for Christmas.

De la Paz also reminded pensioners about the need to confirm annually their eligibility for benefits. "Avoid temporary suspension of your pension by confirming your entitlements once you receive an official notice from SSS," she said.

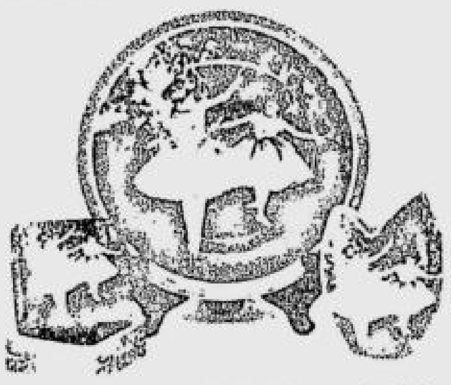
There are several ways to reconfirm eligibility. A handicapped pensioner can request for a home visit by an SSS representative. Or a pensioners can simply respond to the SSS letter, or send a certification that he/she is alive and eligible to receive pension.

The certification can be endorsed by: a regular SSS employee who has been with the institution for at least five years; a teller in the bank where pensioner has an account; local postman or barangay chair.

De la Paz said the procedure was part of the Annual Confirmation of Pensioners program to delete from the roster of beneficiaries those who have died, remarried or recovered from their disabilities.

We wish our fellow consumers a Merry Christmas!

E-mail the author at mvgiron07@yahoo.com



SHOW plates, candle holders and mini vases with well-known artworks

Brighten up the dinner table

RUSTAN'S GIFT PAVILION HAS A WIDE selection of gift items, from teapots to European oil lamps and "Gone with the Wind" figurines.

The Charlotte de Vita Teapot Collection offers handcrafted, hand-painted, numbered and authenticated teapots. Moreover, every purchase supports Charlotte di Vita's aid program that builds communities in South America, Asia and Africa. Available at Rustan's Makati and Shangri-La Plaza and Ayala Cebu.

To brighten up the dinner table, Artis Obris Collectible Decor Series from Geobel features classic paintings such as Claude Monet's "La Promenade" (1875) and Edgar Degas' "Two Dancers on Stage" (1874) cast on show plates, candle holders and mini vases. Renowned masters such as Renoir, Klimt and Van Gogh are also featured. Available at Rustan's Makati and Shangri-La Plaza.

For loved ones who like to collect movie memorabilia, give figurines of iconic screen characters that play musical scores, too! The "Gone with the Wind" figurine set carries Scarlett O'Hara, while "The Wizard of Oz" figurine set features well-loved characters Dorothy, The Cowardly Lion, The Scarecrow, and The Tin Man. Available at Rustan's Makati and Shangri-La Plaza.

You can also get original artworks by Mae Chan (at Rustan's Makati, Shangri-La Plaza and Alabang) and oil lamps from Europe in vivid colors (in all Rustan's stores), which also come with free mineral oil.

The Pet Corner, the latest addition to the Gift Pavilion, offers clothes, stylish collars, bows, munchies, carrier totes and other accessories for pets. Exclusively at Rustans Makati, Shangri-La Plaza, Alabang and Ayala Cebu.

Other unique gift ideas are "Name Your Game" and "Girls' Night Out Bunko Dice Game" board games and inspirational cards and books.

CHARLOTTE de Vita Teapot Collection

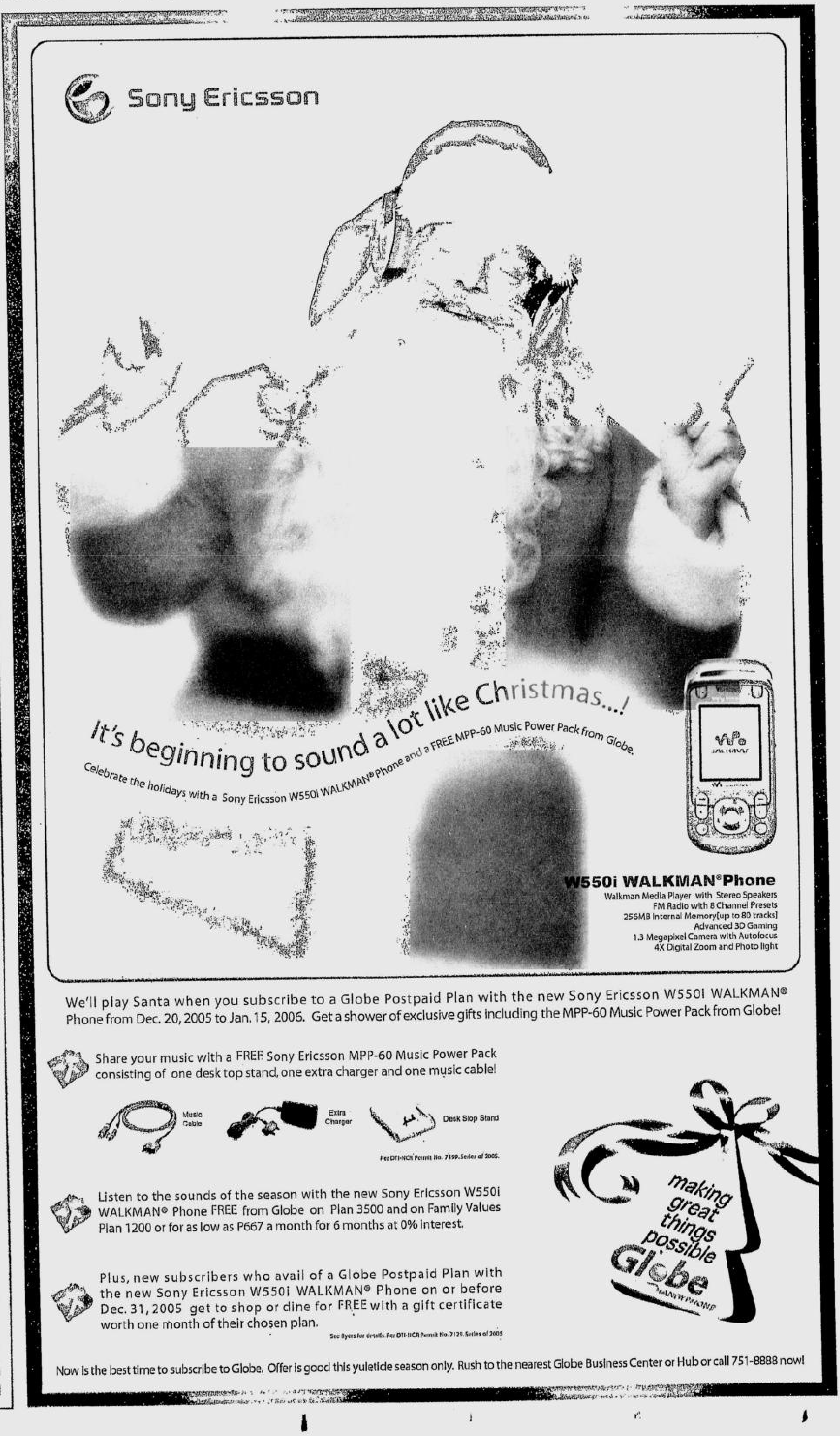
Christmas trees, gifts and food treats!
Santa socks with lots of goodies!
Good things, good tidings!
Love... it makes everything special.

PICO Make It Special

Get holiday tips and recipes every time you buy a PICO oven, rice cooker, flat iron or electric fan. Because we want it to make it special for you. Available now with LIFETIME FREE SERVICE GUARANTEE.

Available at Ansons • Cost U Less
PriceSmart • Rustans • True Value • Unimart

FOR DEALERSHIP INQUIRIES: JERM MARKETING, INC. 838-1631/838-1632



Sony Ericsson

It's beginning to sound a lot like Christmas...!

Celebrate the holidays with a Sony Ericsson W550i WALKMAN® Phone and a FREE MPP-60 Music Power Pack from Globe.

W550i WALKMAN® Phone
Walkman Media Player with Stereo Speakers
FM Radio with 8 Channel Presets
256MB Internal Memory[up to 80 tracks]
Advanced 3D Gaming
1.3 Megapixel Camera with Autofocus
4X Digital Zoom and Photo light

We'll play Santa when you subscribe to a Globe Postpaid Plan with the new Sony Ericsson W550i WALKMAN® Phone from Dec. 20, 2005 to Jan. 15, 2006. Get a shower of exclusive gifts including the MPP-60 Music Power Pack from Globe!

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DRUNKEN Fruit Bars

ALMOND Wafers

Yummy holiday gifts

BAKED GOODS MAKE PRACTICAL AND charming yuletide gifts. All you need to do is package them nicely.

For more cooking and presentation tips, visit Dorothy's Cooking School and Traveling Cooking School or call 7217735, fax 7217749 or e-mail dorothyferreria@skyinet.net.

Almond Wafers

1/2 c butter
1/2 tsp vanilla or almond extract
2/3 c white sugar
¼ c egg whites
1 1/3 c sifted cake flour
¼ tsp fine salt
1/3 c almond flakes
Glad Bake Paper

Preheat the oven to 375 °F. Line four cookie sheets with Glad Bake Paper. Set aside.

In a mixing bowl, cream the following ingredients until white—butter, vanilla or almond extract and sugar. Gradually pour in the egg whites while beating the mixture at medium speed. At low speed, blend in the cake flour and the salt.

Transfer an adequate amount of cookie batter in a piping bag fitted with a basketweave tip. Pipe out into inch strips directly into tile cookie sheets, approximately 1/2 inch apart. Sprinkle the top surface with almond flakes. Bake for 6-8 minutes or until the edges are golden brown. Allow to cool in the pan for 3 minutes before transferring them to Gladware Storage container.

For a nice leaf design use a leaf cookie stencil. Position the stencil in tile cookie sheet. Spoon about a teaspoon of the cookie batter in the center of the stencil. Spread the batter using a metal offset spatula. Carefully lift the stencil and sprinkle the surface with almonds. Continue the process with the remaining cookie batter.

Gift-giving idea: Wrap the Gladware Container with *sinamay* and decorate with ribbons.

Chocolate Rugelach

2 c sifted all-purpose flour
3 tbsp white sugar
1/2 tsp fine salt
1/2 c butter
1/2 c cream cheese
1/4 c all-purpose cream
1 egg yolk
Filling:
1/4 c softened butter
1/2 c choco chips
1/2 c coarsely chopped walnuts
¼ c dark brown sugar
1 tsp cinnamon powder
Glad Cling Wrap and Glad Bake Paper

Combine the flour, the sugar and the salt in a bowl. Add the rest of the ingredients and beat until blended.

Divide the mixture into 4 equal parts and wrap each portion in a sheet of Glad Cling Wrap. Chill for at least 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350 °F. Line several cookie sheets with Glad Bake Paper. Set aside. Process the filling minus the butter in a blender/mini chopper. Set aside.

Working with a portion at a time, roll out each portion into a round disk approximately 12 inches wide and ¼ inch thick. Spread about 1 tablespoon of butter as evenly as possible. Sprinkle an adequate amount of the chocochip mixture. Cut the cookie batter into 12 wedges.

CHOCOLATE Rugelach

Working with a piece at a time, roll the cookie from the long end toward the center forming a mini croissant. Transfer the cookies to the prepared cookie sheet and bake for 20-25 minutes or until the cookies become light golden brown.

Note: For a shiny rugelach, brush the surface of the cookies with a beaten egg during the last 5 minutes of baking. The Glad Oven Bags can be used as gift packaging, with just a bright ribbon for accent.

Drunken Fruit Bars

3/4 c packed dark brown sugar
1/2 c white sugar
1 tbsp glucose
1 tbsp dark rum
2 whole eggs
1 c butter, melted
1 ¼ c sifted all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp sifted baking powder
1/4 tsp cinnamon powder
1/2 tsp fine salt
1/2 c local glazed fruits
1/2 c raisins
1/2 c chopped dried apricot
1/2 c shredded dried coconut
Glad Foil

Preheat the oven to 350 °F. Line a 7" X 11" rectangular baking pan with a sheet of Glad Foil, dull side up. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the following ingredients using a wire whip—brown sugar, white sugar, glucose, rum and eggs. Beat until smooth. Then pour in melted butter. Beat until incorporated. Then add the rest of the ingredients. Beat until blended. Transfer the batter to the prepared baking pan. Bake for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in all four corners comes out clean. Brush the top surface with 1 tablespoon of dark rum. Allow to cool at room temperature and then chill overnight for best results.

Slice the cookies into 24 bars. Wrap individually in Glad Foil and then in colored cellophane. Wrapping in foil preserves the flavor of the mini fruit cake bar.

One-stop gift store

ROBINSONS SUPERMARKET'S Yuletide Gift Choices 2005 has a wide array of items suitable for corporate and personal gifts, giveaways or prizes for Christmas parties.

Baskets loaded with pasta, juice, cheese, chips, canned goods, spreads and chocolates, among others, cost as low as P100. There are also fruits in boxes and baskets and wine combos (wine and ham, or wine and chips, and more).

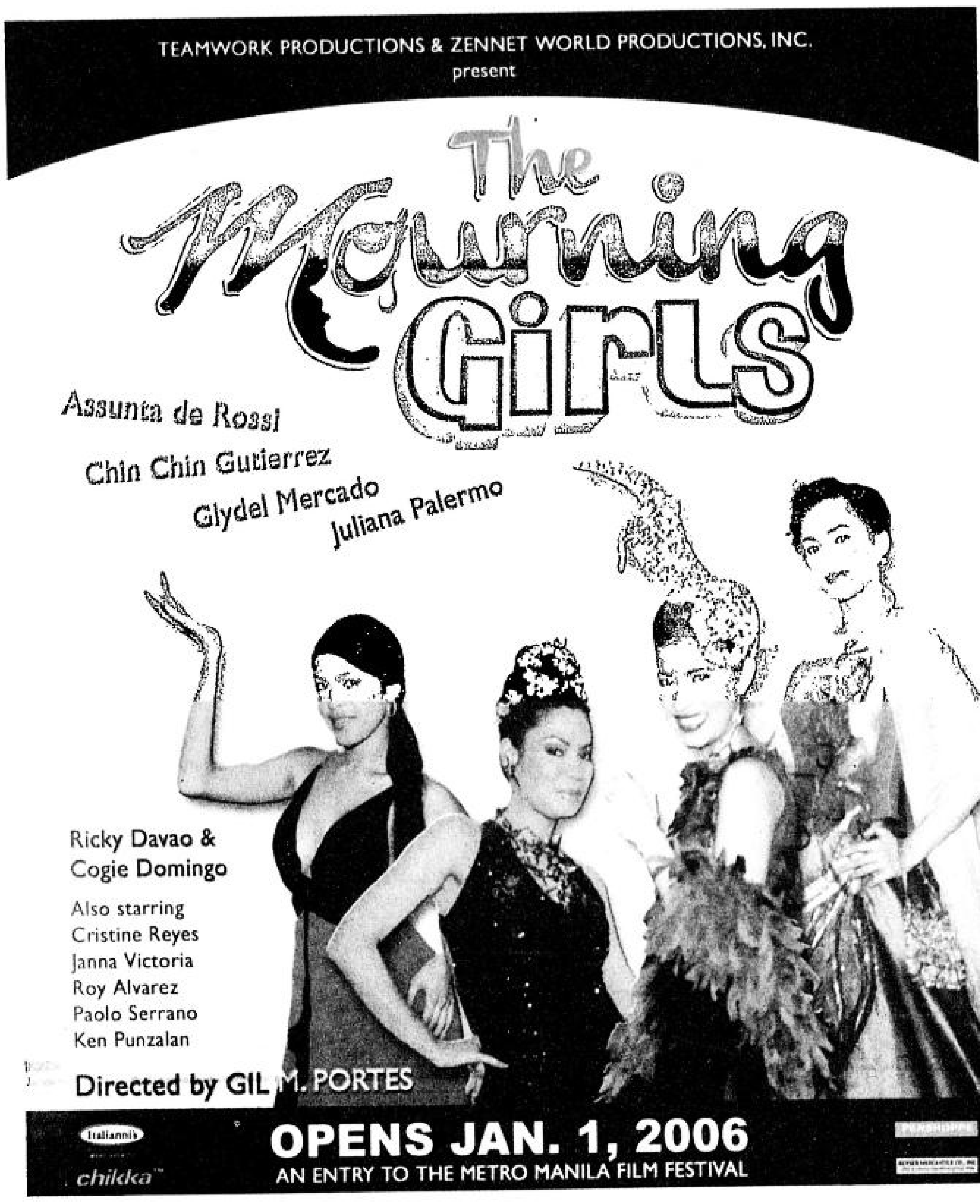
GIFT basket, P750

WINE combo, P250 and P300 (below)

You may also create your own basket by choosing from the various products in the supermarket shelves. Include Christmas "must-haves" like *queso de bola*, ham, bottle of wine, chocolates, fruits, etc.

Robinsons gift certificates are also available in P100 and P500 denominations at the store's Customer Service Center. Also available are fruitcakes and food for the gods.

Call or visit the Robinsons Supermarket branch nearest you.



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